



## GARDEN JOY

Glimpse behind the wall at historic plot



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## PANTO TIME

Fairy Godmother Niki has The X Factor



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## Arrests are made after fatal road collision

A 39-year-old man has been killed in a suspected hit-and-run on a busy dual carriageway at Quinton.

Police believe the man was knocked down by a white Mercedes in Hagley Road West on Saturday night.

The car was driven away from the scene but was stopped in nearby Wolverhampton Road by police.

A 30-year-old man and a 22-year-old woman were arrested on suspicion of causing death by dangerous driving.

They have been bailed as officers continue their investigation.

House-to-house enquiries have been carried out and drivers on the road at the time of the crash have been spoken to.

PC Stuart Thorpe, from the Collision Investigation Unit, said: "This is a tragic event and we are currently following up a number of enquiries."

"It is important that we piece together the events leading up to the collision and I would appeal directly to anyone with any information, to contact us."

The crash happened close to the junction of Stanley Road.

Anyone with information should contact police on 101.

## Man in court over stabbing

A MAN has been charged with the attempted murder of a Quinton fish and chip shop owner.

Leon McTaggart, aged 28, unemployed, from Hagley Road, Birmingham, has also been charged with possession of an offensive weapon.

He was arrested on Friday in connection with the stabbing of the 51-year-old on November 7 at Simply Fish and Chips in Hagley Road West, Quinton. McTaggart was due to appear at Sandwell Magistrates' Court this week.

# PUB CUSTOMERS FIGHT STORE BID

**A CAMPAIGN against a plan to build a convenience store on the car park of a pub in Cradley Heath is gaining momentum.**

Around 80 people turned up to discuss New River Retail's plan for a store next to the Haden Cross pub in Cradley Heath on Monday.

Under a planning application lodged with Sandwell Council, The Co-operative Group would operate the store, creating 20 jobs.

The scheme would leave 13 parking spaces at the Halesowen Road site, eight for the food store with five for the pub.

The proposal has met with strong opposition from pub-goers and nearby residents, concerned over the impact of the store. They fear it will threaten the future of the pub and say there is not enough parking provided, so it could impact on road safety.

### Knock

At the meeting at the pub on Monday, residents discussed how they could object to the plan but also raised fears that if they won, the retail group, which owns the entire site, may move to knock the pub down to make way for the shop.

Cradley Heath and Old Hill Councillor Anne Shackleton said: "It's a difficult position. As we fight this plan, we also have in the back of our minds the fear that they may widen the scheme to include the pub if we won."

"We believe the whole idea is ludicrous. There is never enough parking provided for the pub and store. The strength of opposition is huge. People are very concerned and want to protect the pub."

As well as a petition, campaigners are going to apply for asset of community value status for the pub. This could protect it from being demolished under any future plans. Residents have also been writing to Sandwell Council to object.

The plans were submitted last month. A double garage at the rear of the pub would be demolished to enable a change in parking lay-out. The food store would include a cash machine.

Consultant Thomas Hallett said the store would be built alongside the pub and there are no plans to alter the pub itself as part of current proposals. He added: "This full planning application seeks to create a local food store incorporating an ATM machine on part of the underused car park adjacent to the existing public house with associated car parking, cycle storage, plant and bin storage."

The pub is one of more than 200 acquired by New River Retail from Marston's.

Spokesman Martin Hughes said: "The plan being worked on is to retain the pub into the future and ensure it's going to be a viable business going forward."

The pub is popular in the community with three darts teams and a football team.

## Lights fantastic for the festive season



Enjoying the switching on of the Christmas lights is Isabelle Harris, aged 4, of Stourbridge

THERE were plenty of smiles — and even snow — as thousands turned out to see the Christmas lights switched on in Stourbridge.

Market stalls lined the High Street giving visitors the chance to browse for gifts. There were also vintage steam engines, a food festival and free funfair rides.

Entertainment in the square outside the Crown Centre included performances by The Empty Can — the band behind the Black Country Anthem — and singers from Halesowen-based Startime Variety.

Father Christmas joined Chairman of Stourbridge Chamber of Trade, David Harcourt, to light up the Christmas tree at the top of the High Street.

There were cheers from the crowd as an artificial snow machine added to the festive spirit with youngsters dancing around in the snowflakes.

Mr Harcourt, who organised the event with Dudley Council and the Ryemarket Shopping Centre, thanked the crowds for turning out. "I've never seen quite so many people in Stourbridge at Christmas time before," he added.

It is Brierley Hill's turn with festivities taking place in the town on Saturday with a Christmas tree festival at St Michael's Church from 11am to 2pm, a panto trail in Brierley Hill High Street from 10am to 3.30pm and the lights switched on at 5pm at the Moor Centre.

## Walk-in centres move at hospitals

PLANS have been revealed to bring walk-in health centres and out-of-hours GP services to two hospitals controlled by Sandwell health bosses.

Officials are undertaking a review of health services across Sandwell borough as part of plans to bring services together at 'integrated' sites.

Sandwell and West Birmingham CCG revealed plans to bring services onto the sites of Sandwell Hospital and City Hospital in Birmingham.

These would additionally include some mental health, social care and community nursing services.

### Urgent

Walk-in health and urgent care centres are currently based in Parsonage Street, West Bromwich, and Heath Street, in Winson Green.

But under proposals bosses say these would be moved onto the sites of each nearest hospital.

More than 130,000 patients are expected to visit the walk-in centres under the plans which were being discussed by Sandwell councillors at a meeting last night (Wednesday). This works out at 1,323 visits per week and 189 visits per day at each of the sites in the hospital grounds.

## New leader for council

DUDLEY Council's new leader pledged to put 'community engagement at the heart' of the authority's work, while revealing plans for the outgoing boss to stay on as a cabinet member.

Councillor Pete Lowe was appointed leader of Dudley Council at a meeting of the full council on Monday, following Councillor David Sparks' decision to stand down. The new boss is a Lye and Stourbridge North councillor. He had been deputy leader.

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# Theatre Friends submit business plan

THE Friends of Dudley Hippodrome group has submitted a new proposal to takeover the empty 1930s theatre on Castle Hill. This comes after original plans were dismissed as unviable by an independent review.

Entertainment company The ROK Group has already handed over to Dudley Council its plans to reopen and run the Hippodrome.

Friends members say a refurbished Hippodrome would have 1,600 seats and ticket prices would be 'kept to a minimum'.

Volunteers would need to initially to rent out some of the rooms to generate funds. They have identified five rooms, including first and second floor landings and the basement, that would be refurbished and let out.

Previous operators Gala Bingo spent around £84,000 on running costs per year, according to figures obtained by the group. The Friends say they have assumed an increase of around 33 per cent on the operating costs for up-to-date figures. They claim projected running costs of £112,000 could be reduced by at least 80 per cent if granted charitable status.

Plans suggest the cost of employing 10 members of staff would create annual costs of £200,000. But profits would come through a proportion of ticket sales and the sale of refreshments. Takings would be £16,000 based on selling 800 seats, priced at £20, for a show. Friends group members say they can make £35,000 a year selling refreshments and £88,200 a year in drinks.

# Traders are optimistic after market is sold

THE future of the troubled Cradley Heath Market has been safeguarded after being sold, with new owners planning to revamp it.

A London-based investment firm has bought the market and now plans a refurbishment, much to the delight of traders.

The market went into receivership in March, casting doubt on its future. It went up for sale with auctioneers

Allsop in October with a guide price of £600,000 although initially failed to sell. An investment firm has now bought the market, and 24 surrounding shop fronts, for a knock-down price of £450,000.

Stallholders and councillors, who have been told the revamp plans, held a meeting last week to discuss the development.

Cradley Heath Councillor Anne Shackleton said: "We welcome the development although we are not sure what the buyers envisage, but it sounds as though the firm has experience and believe they can improve the situation in the town centre."

She said the firm had already made several suggestions as to how else the 24 empty shops could be used. "One idea that was communicated to me was the possibility of turning one of the vacant shop fronts into a gym," added the Sandwell councillor. "I think that is a great idea as gyms in town centres are very popular because of accessibility and that would be a great draw."

"We just look forward to the redevelopment and hope the new owners will breathe new life into it."

Gary Link, a fishmonger in the market for 23 years, said: "We are very excited about the market's future. It is great that the investment company that has bought it is planning to keep it as a market and it sounds like they have some really interesting ideas."

Lorraine Holmes, Wolverhampton-based area director at MAS, said: "Our Barometer shows that manufacturers are already responding to recent observations by the Bank of England that productivity needs to be raised."

"It is also reassuring that it's not just the large manufacturers who understand what makes them competitive. Our small and medium firms have also recognised the importance of continually improving productivity."

## Enthusiasts restore trolleybus



Volunteer Gordon Ibbotson, 77, with fellow members of the transport group at the museum

RUSTED and rotting, the number 735 Karrier W trolleybus was in dire need of a new lease of life. But now, thanks to the tireless efforts of the Black Country Living Museum's Transport Group, the vehicle, built in 1946, is back to its best.

The volunteers have spent the past three years restoring the bus and painting it from blue and cream to the two shades of blue it would have sported back in its heyday.

The bus, the same model as seen in the Black Country in the 1930s and 40s, is on

loan from Colin Saxton from the Bradford Trolleybus Association.

The trolleybus will start running next year on the museum's line. It will run on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays.

This bus is also important as its transfers are the last created by Stan Letts, a member of the group from the 1980s, and a principal organiser of bus and tramway societies until his death in April. Mr Cooper added: "Stan would have been so keen to see the bus finished."

# Man is rescued after fall down cliff

A MAN fell more than 50ft down a cliff face at a nature reserve in Dudley sparking a major rescue bid by fire crews and paramedics.

Specialist teams were brought in to rescue the man, aged in his 20s, after the fall in Wrens Nest Nature Reserve.

It took emergency services more than an hour to stabilise the man and raise him to safety due to the difficult location where they found him.

The man managed to 999 himself to alert paramedics after the fall from a pathway above the cliff. He suffered arm and pelvic injuries and a suspected chest injury in the accident.

An air ambulance was sent to the scene but the man was taken by road to Birmingham's Queen Elizabeth Hospital for further treatment.

Crews from West Midlands Ambulance Service arrived at the scene first shortly after 11am on Monday. Paramedics from the Hazardous Area Response Team called for the assistance of fire crews to help bring the man to safety. Technical rescue teams from Wednesbury and Bickenhill fire stations joined the crew from Brierley Hill.

## Women hurt in car crash

TWO women were taken to hospital after the cars they were travelling in collided on a Black Country road.

Emergency services were called to the A4123 Birmingham New Road at its junction with Shaw Road in Colesey at 7.15am on Sunday.

A red Daewoo and a green Vauxhall Corsa were involved in the crash. Crews from Bilston Fire Station attended the scene.

West Midlands Ambulance service treated the women but their injuries were not thought to be serious.

## Real reindeer

REAL reindeer will be delighting visitors to Webbs Garden Centre at West Hagley in the run up to Christmas.

The animals will be on site to meet visitors on weekends, starting on Saturday, and from December 22 to December 24.

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## Buses are diverted because of roadworks

BUS passengers across the region are being warned to expect journeys to be diverted due to roadworks.

Operator Diamond Buses said there may be delays affecting the number 41 service due to traffic calming measures being carried out in West Bromwich High Street until March 31.

In Dudley the 205 and 243 are being diverted due to road closures in King Street between Union Street and Flood Street until Saturday between 11.45pm and 6am.

The 205 is running in the direction of Dudley via Stafford Street, The Inhedge, Parsons Street, Ednam Road, Priory Road, New Street, and Fisher Street to Dudley Bus Station.

The 243 is running in the direction of Dudley via Dudley High Street, Stafford Street, The Inhedge, Parsons Street, Ednam Road, Priory Road, New Street, Fisher Street, to Dudley Bus Station.

Then from Dudley via Fisher Street, Castle Street, The Broadway, Ednam Road, Priory Road, Priory Street, Wolverhampton Street, The Inhedge, Stafford Street, Dudley High Street, Vicar Street, King Street. The service then picks up its normal route.

## Today editor job for Lenny

DUDLEY-BORN comedian Lenny Henry will guest edit BBC Radio 4's Today over the festive period.

Actor and TV personality Lenny will be speaking about diversity on the show on December 30.

He will speak to people who broke down racial barriers and examine how much progress is needed in broadcasting, business and sport. Former governor of the Bank of England Mervyn King, House of Commons Speaker John Bercow and former Everything But The Girl singer Tracey Thorn will also take part.

## Animals dumped

MORE than 200 animals have been abandoned in the West Midlands in the past two months. RSPCA figures show 219 animals reported as abandoned in the region. RSPCA Inspector Vicki Taylor says they appreciate 'times are difficult for pet owners' but there is help.

# People having a say on where axe will fall

AROUND 2,500 people have responded to a major consultation as council bosses in Dudley consider £57 million worth of cuts.

Dudley Council wants people to select the top five services across the borough that matter the most to them.

So far around 2,500 responses have been received in three weeks since the consultation launched, the same amount received in total last year. That's out of around 312,900 people living in the borough.

The council is proposing savings of

£22.9m for 2015/16, moving up to £25.3m by 2016/17 and £27.4m by 2017/18. But the borough faces a deficit of up to £30m by 2017/18 if additional savings are not found.

Finance boss Councillor Stuart Turner said he was pleased by the amount of responses received so far.

"The response to the Big Question budget consultation in these first few weeks has been overwhelming and we would like to thank everyone who has taken time to have their say," he said. "We have already re-

ceived around 2,500 responses in just three weeks which is about the same amount we received in total last year.

"This is, in part, due to our improved way of communicating with residents through our new e-bulletin service. We have been committed to engaging with local people over the last couple of years and I would remind residents they have until the end of January to take part — and can do so by going to our website or visiting their local library or Dudley Council Plus."

Money saving proposals include a shake-up of Dudley youth services to claw back £200,000. There are also plans to increase burial fees, expected to bring in £520,000. Savings will be made by transferring the management of the New Bradley Hall care home in Kingswinford to a private firm.

There are proposals to turn off some street lights after midnight to reduce energy bills. Maintenance of parks could also be hit, in an attempt to save £265,000.

# Council promising 'robust' response to horse problem

**THEY are left to fend for themselves on verges and scrubland, chained to trees and stakes in all weathers. Sometimes left to die.**

Allowing horses to graze in public area may seem like a victimless crime, but council bosses and animal welfare charities claim these animals are not only a risk to themselves and the public, but have often been abandoned by owners.

The act of leaving horses to graze on someone else's land is known as fly-grazing — and is illegal. It is an issue which has long plagued the Black Country.

Sandwell councillor Ian Jones said many of the horses are owned by descendants of travellers in the Black Country. He said: "There have been cases of horses frozen to the spot quite literally by their chain."

"We have had fly-grazed horses chocking on their chains and they have had to be rescued. There are some responsible horse owners but some with no sense of responsibility toward these animals."

Both Sandwell and Dudley Councils have been trying to tackle the problem — spending thousands of pounds contracting bailiffs to round up hundreds of horses from council land. Since 2011, Dudley Council has spent £100,000 on removing them.

Dudley environment boss Councillor Hilary Bills said: "Since 2011 there have been more than 460 horses taken from the public highway,

By Robert Cox

reducing the risk to pedestrians, motorists and horses alike, and this service is seen as a model system nationwide.

The council regularly monitors the number of horses illegally fly grazing on council land and periodically takes action through a separate retained horse bailiff with specific targeted impoundment authority.

The council also posts enforcement notices at certain locations. It also works with organisations such as the RSPCA to address a range of issues, and other animal welfare charities to promote equine passporting and chipping events.

Councillor Bills said that the problem is worse in winter. She added: "The number of horses left in poor condition by irresponsible owners can increase in the winter months, however, we adopt a robust monitoring regime to help address animal welfare concerns across the borough"

## Double murder trial date

A TRIAL date has been set for a man accused of murdering two pensioners, including an 80-year-old Halesowen woman. Leo Barnes, 32, is alleged to have killed Cynthia Beaman in Halesowen and Philip Silversome in London on consecutive days in June. Barnes, of Balsall Heath, appeared via video at Wolverhampton Crown Court having pleaded not guilty to two murder counts. He was remanded in custody for trial at Wolverhampton on January 15.



Glenda Jukes is delighted with her bargain priced television at Merry Hill Asda

## Festive rush has begun at Merry Hill

MORE than 200,000 shoppers will descend upon Merry Hill for one of the busiest weekends of the year.

The shopping extravaganza kicked off with Black Friday, which saw tens of thousands of bargain-hunters scramble to get cut-price deals.

Hundreds queued from the early hours and, while the sales at Merry Hill passed peacefully, the American-import of Black Friday drew criticism from police as fights and scuffles broke out in other areas of the country.

### Queues

Bosses at the Brierley Hill shopping centre said Christmas trading was already up 30 per cent on last year.

On Friday around 560 people arrived at the centre's Asda to grab bargains within the first hour of trading.

Queues had formed 90 minutes before it opened at 8am with 200 people hitting the shop floor within seconds of staff welcoming them inside.

First in the queue was Glenda Jukes from Brierley Hill, who declared the deals to help her save up to £300 were too good to miss.

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### Centres will help dementia patients

THE second stage of a £1.6 million project to revamp day centres to help them better serve the needs of residents with dementia has been completed.

Dudley Council has spent £650,000 overhauling Brett Young Day Centre in Halesowen. It follows the completion of refurbishment at Brettell Lane Day Centre in Stourbridge.

They have been turned into 'Dementia Gateways' to help 1,300 people as part of a scheme to improve the support given to the growing numbers diagnosed with the condition.

#### Couple injured in Brierley Hill crash

A COUPLE were taken to hospital after a head-on crash that caused a traffic jam at Merry Hill shopping centre.

Emergency services were called to Central Avenue, at around 5.45pm on Saturday after two cars collided.

The driver of a silver saloon car had to be cut free by firefighters from Brierley Hill and was taken to Russells Hall Hospital with his wife for treatment.

The driver of the other car suffered minor injuries.

#### Discover park's history on trail

WALKERS will be able to learn more about the history of a grade I listed park.

Wardens at the Leasows in Halesowen will host a walk on Saturday, from 10am to 1pm. This is a rare chance to follow the original circular route which crosses part of the current golf course, usually out of bounds.

To book this or a Christmas wreath making session call (01384) 814642.

#### Minor injuries in two car accident

TWO cars were involved in a crash in Fenton Street, Brierley Hill, last week.

Fire crews were called to the accident and paramedics treated a mother and daughter, who had been travelling in a Renault Scenic, for minor injuries. The other vehicle involved in the accident at 7.30pm last Wednesday was a Fiat Punto carrying two people.

### Cornbow classics

HALESOWEN Orchestra performs Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker and works by Brahms and Elgar at the Cornbow Hall on December 13, 7.30pm. Tickets are £10 and free for under-12s. Call 0121 550 0956.

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REALITY check, please. Home Secretary Theresa May says Britain faces a terror threat "unmatched before or since 9/11." That's a nasty attack of amnesia, Mrs May. Have you really forgotten that before 9/11 we had 30 years of the IRA Troubles? That was real terrorism. Thousands of bombs were detonated all over the United Kingdom and Ulster. More than 3,500 people were killed and 47,500 injured. Since 9/11 there has been one successful Islamist attack on the UK, the 7/7 Tube bombings of 2005 in which 52 people died, plus the slaying of Lee Rigby by a pair of deranged psychopaths. To compare today's nebulous terrorist threat with the real, daily carnage of the Troubles is to rewrite history with no regard for the facts. The truth is that you are far less likely to be involved in a terrorist incident today than at any time in the 1970s, 1980s or 1990s. Why politicians want to convince you otherwise is anyone's guess.

MEDIA doctor Max Pemberton points out to Bob Geldof that Ebola is by no means the biggest threat to Africa. As he puts it: "Diarrhoea kills far more people than Ebola. Why hasn't Bob released a single about that?" Possibly because the Diarrhoea Song already exists. It is often heard being sung lustily on coach trips by Year Six kids and, frankly, no-one would want to buy it.

**Don't miss Peter Rhodes every Monday to Friday in your Express & Star**

# £20m rail bid to bring tourists to Castle Hill

**A LIGHT rail service taking train passengers into Dudley for the first time in 50 years could be opened within five years under a £20 million flagship project.**

The state-of-the-art railcar would transport millions of visitors from Dudley Port station to the former station at the bottom of Castle Hill. This would help tourists visit Dudley Zoo, the Black Country Living Museum and Dudley Canal Trust. There are also plans to then extend the light rail service towards Dudley bus station.

**By Alex Ross**

The scheme has been unveiled following a deal struck between Dudley Council and Warwick Manufacturing Group, which wants to use it as a pilot scheme for its next generation of railcars.

The group will open a National Centre For Development of Very Light Rail Technology at the new station. Around 45 people would work at the site, overseeing the trial service and developing technology.

Two tracks would be laid on a disused freight line from Dudley Port to the town with one used for the passenger service and the second for exclusive use by the tram developers.

The group and council have support from Centro.

Dudley Council transport boss Councillor Khurshid Ahmed said a business case was being written up for funding with bids to be

made to the Government's Local Growth Fund and to the European Union. It is hoped that work could start as early as next year, with the opening of the passenger service within five years.

Councillor Ahmed said: "The passenger tram train service would be the jewel in the crown for the continued regeneration of Dudley. It would bring huge potential for the town, bringing in millions of new visitors who currently face difficulty getting to the town and its attractions.

"Thirty seven million people visit Birmingham each year, with 70 per cent coming in on train and we need an easy link for those people into Dudley."

He added that the scheme would not stop the council's aspiration for an extension of the Midland Metro service through Dudley to Brierley Hill.

## Bubl  relaunch for arena



Michael Bubl  performing at the Barclaycard Arena this week

HE'S the down-to-earth Canadian crooner who likes nothing better than shopping in the Bullring when he comes to Brum.

And this week Michael Bubl  rolled into town to perform shows launching a new lease of life for Birmingham's revamped NIA – now renamed the Barclaycard Arena after a £26 million revamp.

The concert was the first of a two-night residency at the city centre venue with the singer performing a collection of his hits, classic covers (including 'The Beatles' 'All You Need Is Love') and the odd Christmas favourite.

The 39-year-old global superstar arrived in the second city four days ahead of his first date and posted a selfie via social media from a city restaurant and the Bullring where he started his Christmas shopping on Saturday.

Bubl , who has sold more than 35 million records, officially opened the new-look arena, which now includes an Ed's Easy Diner restaurant and a Barclaycard lounge.

## Academy needs to improve, say Ofsted

AN academy in Sandwell has been rated as 'requires improvement' in its first inspection since it converted from a school two years ago.

But the behaviour of pupils and leadership and management of Bristnall Hall Academy in Oldbury were judged as 'good'.

Ofsted said that not enough students had made consistently good progress since the academy opened but this was improving.

### Enthusiasm

There were also concerns about teaching with inspectors saying it was 'not consistently inspiring and interesting'.

But the work of principal Vince Green, appointed in September to make improvements, was recognised.

Inspectors said he had 'galvanised staff enthusiasm' since joining and that staff and students were 'overwhelmingly positive about the principal's vision for further improvement'.

Mr Green said: "We are really pleased that the changes already made within our academy were acknowledged by the Ofsted team. The areas they identified for further improvement are in line with our thinking."

It was Bristnall Hall Technology College before becoming an academy in December 2012.



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## Boost for charity helping gamblers

A GAMBLING charity which runs a residential centre in Dudley has been awarded £1.6 million funding.

The cash from The Responsible Gambling Trust will support Gordon Moody Association's treatment for problem gambling for the next three years.

Gordon Moody Association runs residential centres in Dudley and Beckenham where it offers intensive 12-week programmes to help people with severe gambling problems.

It will also enable the charity to extend its counselling work and offer new services for women.

Managing director Elaine Smethurst said: "Gordon Moody Association was the first charity in the UK dedicated to providing help to problem gamblers. The Responsible Gambling Trust's support will enable us to provide residential treatment for many more problem gamblers and develop our ambitious plans for the charity."

Dudley North MP Ian Austin said: "The charity does a lot to help problem gamblers in Dudley and I'm delighted that this new funding will allow them to help hundreds more."

The Responsible Gambling Trust is an independent national charity funded by donations from the gambling industry.

# Voluntary groups help to ease pressure on hospitals

**VOLUNTARY groups are being drafted in for a new project aiming to transform health and care services in Sandwell while helping to ease pressure on hospitals.**

The Sandwell Community Offer is made up of six pilot schemes operating across Sandwell.

Each scheme involves voluntary and community organisations working together to offer people a range of support, in their own community, with the aim of reducing demand on hospitals.

Each one of the schemes offers a different range of services based on the needs of each area and the strengths of the community organisations involved. Services available through the Sandwell Community Offer include support for carers, practical advice and support for elderly residents.

### Exercise

There are also schemes to help people to access free vaccinations, exercise classes and advising people about health-related services such as help to stop smoking or lose weight.

The schemes will be running in Great Barr and Yew Tree, Greets Green and Lyng, Princes End, Tipton Green and Great Bridge, Oldbury, Tividale and Rowley Regis and Blackheath, Cradley Heath and Old Hill.

Starting in October and running for 12 months, the schemes will be evaluated

against a range of measures, such as the number of admissions to hospital and residential care, and the number of injuries due to falls.

Regular 'community meetings' will be organised by each lead provider inviting local community groups to take part.

Residents living in the pilot areas can contact the organisations themselves if they think they would benefit, or referrals can be made by health or other agency professionals.

Sandwell's cabinet member for adult social care, Councillor Yvonne Davies, said: "The Sandwell Community Offer is all about supporting communities, so they can come together to address their own needs, by providing a range of services, in addition to formal health and care services."

By Heather Large

## Season's Greetings from theatre group



Actors Tony Stamp and Debbie Attwood get ready for Season's Greetings at Netherton

A FAMILY Christmas goes awry in Alan Ayckbourn's comedy Season's Greetings, being presented by Dudley Little Theatre. They aim to have audiences in stitches when the black comedy is staged at Netherton Arts Centre this week.

The production was penned by the playwright in 1980 and is set over Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and Boxing Day in an English family home, where conflicts arise over the festive TV viewing and much more.

It opened at Netherton Arts Centre, in Northfield Road, last night and continues until Saturday.

Society spokesman Chris Ridgeway said: "Ayckbourn's masterly comic presentation of the family Christmas truly hits the mark."

Performances are at 7.30pm. Tickets cost £7 and £6 concessions. For tickets call Chris Ridgeway on (01884) 872583 or 07582 318017. Tickets are also available Gary Flavell Butchers in Cradley Road, Netherton, or online at [www.dudleylittletheatre.org](http://www.dudleylittletheatre.org) website.

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### Festive market at St John's hall

ST John's Church in Cradley Heath is hosting a Christmas market on Saturday from 11am in the church hall. The market will include stalls selling gift items, food and drink stalls will offer punch and turkey sandwiches.

The following weekend the church will host its first Christmas tree festival, from December 12 to 14 with over 25 decorated trees on display. Visitors can also experience concerts from Dudley Wood Primary School on December 12 at 2pm and Cradley Heath Male Voice Choir on the following day at 7pm and a concert by Tom Wenlock on December 14 at 6.30pm. Tickets for the male voice choir and Tom Wenlock are £5 each or both for £7.

#### Choir will sing at craft market

THE sound of music will be ringing out in Dudley as part of festive celebrations.

Cradley Heath youth choir, Pure Harmony, has been confirmed to perform at the Small Business Saturday Christmas market in the town centre.

The performance by the children will take place at 2pm on Saturday. The market will run from 10am to 4pm at Stone Street Square, next to the town's Christmas tree.

There will be free parking in Dudley town centre and across the borough at all council car parks on Saturday, also December 13 and 20.

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## IN MY VIEW

with Mark Andrews

I'M really trying to get my head around all this Black Friday stuff, but as far as I can see it pretty much boils down to this.

People arrive at the shops two hours before they're due to open during one of the coldest months of the year, and queue outside waiting for the nice security guard to let them in.

Then there is a mad stampede, some people get hurt, some people get arrested, but the lucky ones get a giant all-singing, all-dancing television set with 20 per cent off.

Then the following day they switch on the said television set with its 10ft screen, high definition picture and surround sound. And they watch the X-Factor. No, I don't get it either.

□ □ □

IN HIS weekly newspaper column, social commentator Rod Liddle laid into the man from Birmingham who dialled 999 to ask what the number he should dial if he wanted to call the 101 non-emergency police number.

He wrote: "Look, I don't think Brummies are thick. I'm not one of those snobs who hears someone with a Black Country accent and immediately thinks they got a room-temperature IQ. That's nasty and unjustified."

Be honest. You didn't know he was so broad-minded, did you?

But he is wrong. Very wrong.

Actually, most Brummies do think people with a Black Country accent are thick. It's why they call us 'Yam Yams'.

And if he bothered to look into the matter, he would find that there are no shortage of people in the Black Country who share similar preconceptions about our cousins from the big city. It's why we found Crossroads so funny.

You see Rodders, my old bean, the Black Country and Birmingham are different places. Different places where the locals have a sort of love-hate relationship.

Of course it's unfair, and even in the darkest depths of Darlaston, I suspect that people probably know in their hearts that Brummies are not really that much more stupid than the rest of us.

But let's be honest about these things. It might be 'nasty and unjustified', but it's flipping good fun.

Roderick, I normally enjoy your wit, but next time you want to write about people from the West Midlands, it might be a good idea to check your facts before putting pen to paper. Ask one of your colleagues from this neck of the woods, if you have any.

Because you see, me old mucker, people from Brum don't speak with Black Country accents, they speak with, er, Brummie accents.

Even the Brummies know that. Maybe not the ones who ring 999 to ask what the number for 101 is, but most of them.



The Trust's Carole Freer beside the garden's brick wall



Vandalism in one of the former college classrooms



Phil Baldwin in a greenhouse inside the walled garden

# Bringing a secret garden back to life

**ROB COX** gets a glimpse inside Halesowen's historic walled garden as work on its restoration begins

**HUNDREDS** of years ago 'secret' gardens were a feature of large country houses, growing enough fruit and vegetables to feed the entire household.

An 18th century walled garden in Halesowen has been derelict for several years but campaigners are bringing it back to life as they plan to restore it to its former glory for everyone to see.

They have had their first peek into the overgrown walled garden on the Leasowes Park estate and describe it as 'magical'.

Sadly their first glimpse also revealed other visitors had been in the garden — vandals.

## Damage

On entering the Grade I listed garden members of the Halesowen Abbey Trust, which purchased the garden, found vandals had scaled the walls, smashed windows, ripped up electric cables and even lit fires in the two-acre plot of land.

Yet despite the damage, the garden has retained much of its character and community leaders will let the setback alter their restoration plans.

The garden had previously been used by Stourbridge College as a horticultural education centre but none of its students had been inside for the last two years.

Mick Freer, who headed the purchase on behalf of the Trust, said: "The vandals had ripped up cables, torn out copper piping and put graffiti all over the walls. "They had even damaged the sandstone capping on the walls when they had climbed over to gain entry."

"It was tremendously overgrown but at least we can deal with mother nature. There has been two years of growth since



Phil Baldwin opens the gates to Halesowen's historic 'secret garden'

the college came out. It is quite spectacular what can happen in that time."

The walled garden was historically used to grow vegetables and flowers for the estate, which would have had about 20 family members and servants. It contained greenhouses, a boiler and 'a bothy' where the head gardener would sleep to protect his produce from thieves and wildlife.

It was taken over by the local authority in 1934, before Stourbridge College was given the keys in 1974.

The Trust members say the garden

the garden exists but I am sure local people will get behind the project and want to come and visit.

"It is quite a daunting task and it will be very challenging to get it back to how it used to be. I have no doubt it will be well worth it."

Walled gardens were a feature of 18th and 19th century estates and there are other examples locally at Shugborough Estate, Sandwell Park Farm and at Suggall Hall near Stafford.

Part of the wall's role was to prevent it from encroaching on the views from the house but they also had a much more practical purpose.

Helen Edwards, a warden at the Leasowes park estate, said: "Some of the walls have cavities in them which would have been used to heat the environment for the vegetables. They would light a fire in the cavities allowing them to grow more exotic fruit, such as peaches."

"The walls were really to maintain a decent habitat to keep things like rabbits out which could damage the garden. It would have been a very nice and warm and sheltered spot for growing a whole range of vegetables."

"From our point of view as wardens we definitely welcome the move to reopen the garden to the public. It is a valuable part of our history and would be a fantastic addition to a visitor's experience."

The aim of the trust is to restore the garden, to have the buildings in period, to begin growing fruit and vegetables and to have the whole thing open to the public. There may be allotments available to local residents.

It follows work earlier this year to restore three other historic areas in Leasowes Park, created by poet William Shenstone.

The Trust will be seeking grants and sponsors to help pay for the restoration.

Mr Freer added: "It will be the first time in more than 200 years the garden will be open to the public. The potential of the site is enormous."

## WEEK IN POLITICS

with Daniel Wainwright

IF all goes well for the new leader of a Black Country council, he won't be in the job that long.

Pete Lowe is to take over the reins at Dudley Council because David Sparks is tied up with chairing the Local Government Association.

But he's also the Labour candidate for Stourbridge at next year's General Election.

If he wins that, he won't be able to juggle being in Parliament most of the week with being leader so would step down.

This assumes Councillor Lowe is confident of winning the marginal seat, of course. But it won't be easy.

Councillor Lowe is clearly highly respected within the Labour ranks, hence running unopposed. And with 42 out of the 72 seats on the council, it is not as though they were short of possible contenders.

If he wins Stourbridge and stands down, it'll mean the council ends up with its third leader in three years.

Ahead of his own selection meeting, Pete Lowe congratulated Mike Wood on being chosen as the Tory candidate for Dudley South, while also urging people to vote for Labour's Natasha Millward in the same tweet.

Dudley South's Tories decided to throw open the selection process to the public, copying the US system of open primaries.

Mr Wood, a councillor for the Dudley borough, was chosen from a shortlist of four with members of the public who live in the constituency invited to register to attend.

The press weren't allowed in but the Tories said 80 people registered and in the end 45 turned up. Labour seized on this as evidence that the party was heading for disaster. We'll have to wait until May to see.

And there was a brave face put on it by the Tories who blamed the cold, miserable November night for people staying in.

Still, it must have been good for the Tory members' egos to know there was at least one Labour member in their midst keeping an eye on proceedings and tweeting about the numbers.

Mike Wood will be replacing Chris Kelly as the Tory candidate. Mr Kelly is standing down as an MP after one term. But the new contender is following Mr Kelly by being a declared Eurosceptic. Mr Wood admits that David Cameron's renegotiation of Britain's relationship with the EU would have to bring a 'fundamental' change for him to want to vote to stay in if the promised referendum goes ahead.

That's going to be an easier position to defend than being pro-EU and pro-referendum.

Labour doesn't want one. The Tories do. But what a mixed message they'd send if they promise to give the public a choice then hope they don't make the 'wrong' one.

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# Concern at Environment Agency record

I REFER to your recent article under the heading 'Trash Mountain Still Stands Tall'.

Your paper has diligently followed the issues that have arisen around the site used by Refuse Derived Fuel for the last few years and highlighted the problems experienced by local residents. Despite the company's director Robert McNaughton being jailed at the end of last year for failing to meet several deadlines for removal of the waste, this site is still an eyesore and is still awaiting clearance.

What action is the Environment

Agency actually taking? They do not currently appear to know if any material has been removed since McNaughton's release— what situation are they monitoring; what progress has been made regarding the sequestration of McNaughton's assets to contribute towards the cost of this clearance, which was earlier estimated to be circa £750,000.

This same agency is in the process of considering the grant of an environmental permit to a company called Clean Power who wish to develop an anaerobic digester and pyrolysis plant

immediately adjacent to the current waste site still occupied by RDF.

One seriously has to question the ability of the Environment Agency to assess the impact of these proposals on the local residents and also to monitor the management and conduct of this new site if it were to be granted the necessary approvals. This is the same government body who were responsible for a total lack of planning in dealing with the flooding of the Somerset Levels earlier this year.

**J CLARKE**  
Brierley Hill

## No excuse for war vengeance

I read in Peter Rhodes' column what I would say was sanctimonious rubbish. War is awful whatever its form, whether it's between Germany and England or factions in Ireland, Syria, Iraq or anywhere else. I remember well the troubles in Ireland and how one side thought when one died that gave them an excuse to kill a dozen on the other.

The same is happening now in Palestine, Syria and Israel. There is nothing wonderful in vengeance Mr Rhodes, just tears and more death. In the 90s we went to France and visited the war graves of soldiers American, British and German. The Americans were very extravagant, the British smart and well organised. The German cemetery was hidden away with three to a grave, no pomp or ceremony. In the centre was a stone memorial which my son translated and I have never forgotten – 'God has the final word'.

**H CAMWELL**  
Tividale

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### POST

Dudley Chronicle,  
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Letters should be brief and MUST include name, address and telephone number. The Editor reserves the right to condense letters.

### E-MAIL

Dudley.chrons@  
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## Police are a service and not a business

POLICE stations closing, who would have thought the day would come! A police station is meant to offer the confidentiality of seeing a police officer.

This country goes through a financial crisis, suddenly they are of no use. I wonder had there been no crisis would front offices still have to be closed! Do decision makers not realise the public want these facilities and, in my opinion, have the right to have them.

They say modern technology allows people to contact the police and there is no need to attend stations. There are still people who cannot and do not want to understand this modern technology, what about them? If technology is the way to go, why not have it in the front offices and when in a quiet period the staff could take calls from the public.

Closing front offices is the act of business and financial advisors. The police are a service, the public need to have a place to go to in times of distress and trouble. Closing front offices will do two things — there will be a loss of trust, and patrol officers will have to visit home addresses, surely that would be self defeating? In closing these front offices will we have a reduction in the council tax? Why should we pay for something we will no longer have!

**P LOWE**  
Brierley Hill

## Vandals need to know fear

GREAT news regarding the restoration of the walled garden at Leasowes Park. It is a treasure that deserves to be saved and a really useful asset for our children's education.

But how sad once again that such a place has been damaged by vandals. It is a grade one listed area, it is irreplaceable, yet we seem to have become accepting of the fact that anything left without a guard is inevitably going to be vandalised. This makes me think that we need a much stronger deterrent than we have.

When I was growing up we still had the birch. Although seldom used, the threat was enough to keep most boys on the straight and narrow. Obviously we are never going to go back to corporal punishment but maybe there could be some kind of hard physical work.

We need something which is going to be a short sharp shock that will be feared.

**R GWILLIAMS**  
Brierley Hill

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# Get your skates on for thrill rides



Gabriel Njie tests out the new skatepark at Mill Race Lane



Pete Lowe and MP Margot James watch stunt rider Josh Cox

A LONG-AWAITED skate and BMX park has opened in Stourbridge with hundreds of eager riders flocking through the doors at what could become a major attraction for the whole West Midlands.

Unit3Sixty is a dream come true for firefighter Gavin Pardoe, a crew commander for West Midlands Fire Service, who has been working on the £200,000 project for more than 15 months.

The centre which has been created in a former industrial unit in Mill Race Lane offers facilities for

Stourbridge is now a location of one of the UK's top indoor skate parks, Heather Large reports

BMX riding, skateboarding and scooter riding. It is one of the biggest parks in the country.

Saturday's official opening saw more than 200 people visit the centre, which also hosted an all-night event with live DJ's playing from 8pm until 8am.

## Positive

Mr Pardoe said it was great to see his dream come to fruition and said feedback so far had been 'very positive'.

"It's been really encouraging," said Mr Pardoe. "There is a big

skateboarding following in Stourbridge town and in the borough of Dudley too, so there has been a lot of support."

The official opening was carried out by Councillor Pete Lowe who has supported the project since the early stages.

He said it was an 'absolute pleasure' to unveil the centre, adding: "We are all so proud of what we now have in Stourbridge."

Other activities planned within the 22,000 sq ft base include graffiti art studios, an urban dance centre and DJ classes. Ten part-time and volunteer roles have also been created as part of the work.

Ideas for the park came following calls for new facilities after the closure of the popular Ramparts skate park. The scheme has been made possible thanks to funding from a number of organisations. They include £10,000 from council-run community forums and a £75,000 loan from Charity Bank.

Tesco, Waitrose and the Ryemarket in Stourbridge and Black Country businessman Geoff Hill have also supported the scheme which won the backing of the town's MP Margot James. She said: "I am absolutely delighted for Gavin and his team who, through sheer hard work and dedication, have built a magnificent new skate park."



A skateboarder in action at the new indoor park in Stourbridge

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# Organisers celebrate Black Country success



Mayor of Dudley Margaret Aston with Gracie Sheppard and other guests at the civic reception for festival organisers

**THEY banged the drum for the bostin' Black Country and now those behind the festival celebrating its heritage have been honoured.**

Tens of thousands of people joined in the Black Country Festival celebrations in July with dozens of events.

Those who were involved in making the summer celebration happen have been honoured at a civic reception in Dudley. Among those invited by Mayor of Dudley Councillor Marg-

aret Aston were Gracie Sheppard, the Stourbridge schoolgirl who designed the Black Country flag, and James Stevens, who created a Black Country anthem for the event.

All of the attendees at the Mayor's Parlour were presented with a certificate and Gracie was also presented with a framed picture of her design flying in various locations across the borough.

"To be invited in to see the Mayor has rounded off an unbelievable year," she said. "From seeing the flag flown from Dudley Town Hall back in January and then seeing all the flags at the

festival in July, it has been an amazing experience.

"It has been really nice to come here today and see everyone who was involved in the festival. Next year I'm sure it will be bigger and better and I'm really looking forward to it."

The festival featured a Black Country themed Stourbridge Carnival; a three-day festival of comedy, culture and music at Red House Glass Cone; an all day event on Stone Street Square in Dudley and a performance by the Fizzogs comedy group at Brierley Hill Civic Hall. It culminated in official Black Country Day on July 14.

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# Musical nostalgia for the 60s and 80s

Reviews by Leon Burakowski

**SOME** of today's hottest young acts — including Sam Smith, Ed Sheeran and Olly Murs — cover hits from around 30 years ago on 37-track double CD Sounds Of The 80s, out on Warner Music.

But the old school also get in on the act with several artists of an 80s vintage covering songs by their peers. Former Housemartin Paul Heaton returns, with Jacqui Abbott, to Caravan Of Love, Chrissie Hynde covers Morrissey (Every Day Is Like Sunday) and Level 42 take on INXS (Need You Tonight).

Inspired by Sara Cox's popular Radio 2 show, the album does throw up a few interesting chalk-and-cheese combinations, such as British country siblings Ward Thomas covering Michael Jackson's Man In The Mirror, Will Young's tender take on Womack and Womack's Teardrops and Birdy's radical revamp of Madonna hit Lucky Star.

Most artists just play it straight but Sam Smith is a good choice for Whitney Houston's How Will I Know, Passenger's voice is ideal for Romeo & Juliet by Dire Straits, as is James Blunt for Elton John's I Guess That's Why They Call It The Blues, and Kylie takes Bette Davis Eyes by Kim Carnes to the disco.

Other combinations include Boyzone with The Whole Of The Moon by The Waterboys, Ed Sheeran with Bruce Springsteen's Atlantic City, London Grammar on Chris Isaak's Wicked Game and Olly Murs having fun with Earth Wind & Fire's disco classic Let's Groove.

Katie Melua revises Black's Wonderful Life and Train take on Simply Red's



The Exception — 1960s Brum Beat outfit rescued from obscurity by new release

Holding Back The Years. The Overtones are a bland choice for Wham's Wake Me Up Before You Go Go but The Pierces do justice by Peter Gabriel and Kate Bush duet Don't Give Up.

Cherry Red's RPM imprint rescues a band's legacy from the mists of time with **The Eagle Flies On Friday: Complete Recordings 1967-1969** by Brummie rock band The Exception. The band were formed by ex-members of The Uglys and included bassist Dave Pegg and guitarist Roger Hill who went on to Fairport Convention. The Exception were led by Alan 'Bugsy' Eastwood from Erdington.

The title track has a Northern Soul vibe and there are typically swinging 60s mod numbers like Gabardine Saturday Night Street Walker and the jazzy Sunday Night At The Prince Rupert. The Animals-like bluesy Turn Over The Soil is a highlight.

However, the cringe-worthy ska novelty Rub It Down and Elvis satire Back Room perhaps explains why they didn't become as big as The Move or The Spencer Davis Group.

Fans of the era will also enjoy the de-

tailed sleeve notes on the Brum Beat scene in Birmingham and the Black Country during the 60s. This issue also marks the first time their rare album The Exceptional Exception has been on CD, which also includes several previously unissued tracks.

From the same label comes **Never Say Goodbye: The Complete Recordings 1964-1966** by the Bo Street Runners, a popular Mod band on the London scene who never had hits despite TV exposure via a Ready Steady Go talent show. Their bluesy Manfred Mann-like numbers turn more soulful with the latter addition of fresh singer Mike Patto and drummer Mick Fleetwood, who went on to mega-success with Fleetwood Mac.

RPM have also put out **Our Day Will Come: The Very Best of Ruby and the Romantics**, a double CD 42-track 1960s set by a great mellow soul outfit in The Platters mode. The combination of Ruby Nash's lead vocals with the male harmonies and shimmering Hammond organ is a delight, and a couple of Northern Soul gems can be found among the easy listening standards.

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Wednesday 31st Dec 9.00am-2.00pm  
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## Have a say on health at forum

PATIENTS can have their say on health services at a forum being held on Thursday, December 11.

The ‘Putting You in the Driving Seat’ event is being held by Dudley CCG. It will run from noon until 2.30pm at Brierley Hill Civic Hall.

People will be able to share their views with doctors and bosses during the event.

Dr Steve Mann, Clinical Executive and GP, from Dudley CCG, said “We make policy decisions every week that affect healthcare in Dudley, this session will use a real example of policy decision making and put you in the driving seat, playing the role of key board members to give you a real insight on the process and how decisions are made.

“We will facilitate an interactive decision making workshop, and then share our board members own views on it.”

To book a place at the event call Clare Hamilton on (01384) 321764.

# Borough is worst for fuel poverty in the Black Country

**TENS of thousands of households across the rewgion are living in fuel poverty and struggling to keep their homes heated, new figures have revealed.**

In the Black Country 63,579 properties out of 384,987 homes cannot afford their fuel bills.

The data has been released by Age UK as part of their Warm Homes campaign against fuel poverty, warning 24,000 older people could die because of the cold.

The figures include all households, regardless of their occupants’ age and were worked out based on the household income. Someone is

classed as fuel poor if they would spend so much of their earnings to heat their home it would take them below the poverty line.

In some areas between one in 10 and almost one in five homes are classed as being fuel poor.

Dudley has the highest number of fuel poor households in the area with 19,731 out of 137,166 properties. That’s just above Wolverhampton with 19,057 homes in fuel poverty out of 104,949 — though given the city’s smaller population, the proportion is worse with 18.2 per cent of homes affected compared with Dudley’s 14.4 per cent.

Sandwell has 11, 341 out of 68,925 homes in such poverty, which is 16.5 per cent.

MP for Dudley North Ian Austin said: “Lots of families in the Black Country are struggling

to make ends meet. Wages here are below the national average and bills keep going up, with energy bills rocketing by £300 in the last four years.

“For more than one in ten homes in the Black Country things are so bad that heating bills are pushing them into poverty.

“I want energy bills to be frozen while we get long-term solutions in place like scrapping Ofgem (The Office of Gas and Electricity Markets) and getting thousands of homes in Dudley insulated.”

Caroline Abrahams of Age UK said: “No older person should worry that they could die from the cold in their own home. Fuel poverty is a national scandal which has claimed the lives of too many people for far too long”

## Lynx are loving zoo’s woodchip

A CARPATHIAN lynx family are rolling around in joy after their paddock was re-vamped with woodchip from Dudley Zoo’s recycled trees.

As part of the attraction’s ongoing site management trees at the end of their natural life have been taken down around the 40-acre site. And not a bit has been wasted, with leaves and branches used to feed our giraffe, tapir and Barbary sheep families and the remainder used to make woodchip for the lynx paddock.

Team Leader Jay Haywood,said the lynx family, Dave, Daisy and triplets Dick, Dom and Daphne, were loving playing in their new-look home. He said: “In a big cat, the part of the brain that processes smells is vast and when they smell different scents they can release happy hormones. They have started rubbing and rolling in the woodchip.”

## Strings orchestra with a difference



Professional banjo player Danielle Saxon Reeves from Lye

A MUSICIAN is preparing to host a concert backed by the community music group she founded more than a decade ago.

Danielle Saxon Reeves, of Lye, is staging the show on Saturday with the Midlands Fretted Orchestra.

The orchestra, which has members from across the West Midlands, will feature special guests at their annual Christmas Celebration show at the Bonded Warehouse, in Canal Street, Stourbridge.

The In Sound Company Community Choir will be joining the orchestra.

The orchestra brings together acoustic instruments seldom found in other ensembles, such as mandolin, banjo, bass and steel guitars.

A host of seasonal favourites will be played including music by Prokofiev as well as Christmas carols.

Tickets are £6.50 with under 16s free if accompanied by a paying adult. To book call 07738 258506. Doors and bar open at 7pm and the concert begins at 7.30pm. For more information about the orchestra call (01384) 893987.

## More free childcare places are on offer

MORE than 18,000 toddlers in the West Midlands are accessing free childcare, new figures show.

The Government offers free childcare to two year olds from low income families, and has doubled the number of available places to include 40 per cent of families.

Childcare and education minister Sam Gyimah has launched a campaign encouraging parents to check their eligibility.

Mr Gyimah said: “The early years count which is why making sure parents have access to affordable, high quality education is part of our plan for education. I know that childcare costs can be a real burden for some parents and am pleased to see so many parents in the West Midlands taking up the free childcare offered for their two-year-old.

“I want every parent in the West Midlands to look at the Government support on offer and access whatever you can.”

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# Councils to tackle 'crack cocaine' of gambling

**COUNCILS** in the West Midlands are backing a campaign to clamp down on high stakes betting machines, dubbed the 'crack cocaine' of gambling by critics.

Dudley, Wolverhampton, Sandwell and Birmingham councils are among 93 local authorities nationwide who have joined together to call on the Government to bring an end to what they call 'casino-style gambling on the nation's high streets'.

The authorities say they have seen a rise in the number of bookies, mainly big name chains on high streets, introducing more Fixed Odds Betting Terminals.

## Maximum

They want the maximum stake cut to £2 on machines that can see up to £100 bet per 20 second spin.

One machine alone could see £18,000 gambled in an hour, and with up to four machines in a store, £72,000 could be spent during peak hours, far exceeding the level of other gaming machines found in bingo halls and arcades, according to London's Newham Council which is leading the campaign.

Tom Watson, Labour MP for West Bromwich East, has been campaigning against the machines. He said: "People who know about these machines are not surprised to hear them called the crack cocaine of gambling."

"Players can lose hundreds of pounds in minutes on them. They are a magnet for problem gamblers. Their impact has been to turn many shopping areas into high street digital casinos."

"I'm extremely grateful that local councils recognise their is a growing problem with these pernicious machines."

Councillor Roger Lawrence, leader of Wolverhampton City Council, said: "These terminals can be highly addictive. There is an impact on people who are extremely vulnerable and their families."

# Students revamp building



Construction students who will be refurbishing a former residential home

CONSTRUCTION students in Stourbridge are taking part in a working project to restore a former college building.

Students on the construction and built environment course at Stourbridge College Advanced Technology Centre are helping bring a site next door to the college back to life.

The students, based at Brierley Hill, will carry out a full refurbishment before the building goes on the market.

Executive director of estates, at Birmingham Metropolitan College,

John Starmer, said: "The White House, based next door to the Stourbridge College, was a former residential home which has been used as offices for a number of years."

"To support the students to obtain skills in a real working environment we are asking that, as part of their course work, they undertake the internal refurbishment of the building in order for the us to put it on the market for sale, which is an excellent opportunity for them to get some 'live' work experience."

# Over half memorial wreckers not caught

MORE than half of the vandals and thieves who targeted war memorials in the region over the last three years have not been caught, police figures reveal.

West Midlands Police say they have 10 offences involving damage to memorial sites on record since 2011.

Only four instances recorded by officers over this period of time have been described as being 'detected'.

Chairman of the Gornal Royal British Legion, Councillor Ken Finch, said: "It is nothing but disgusting."

"In my opinion anyone found doing something like this should be punished to the highest degree."

## Graffiti

"They are damaging sites built in memory of people who died so they could live a free life. It shows absolutely no respect."

Vandals who scrawled graffiti over the steps leading to the cenotaph in Wolverhampton City centre's St Peter's Church just days before First World War memorial ceremonies earlier this year were caught, as were the thieves who stole a bronze plaque from the war memorial at St Augustine's Church in Dudley.

Cases left undetected include an arson attack on St John's Preservation Ground in Dudley last year, where a poppy wreath was set alight.

Offenders who stole a bronze rifle from a memorial at Dudley, have not been found.

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# Black Country man who won over a Welsh town

## It's monkey business



Little Lottie, the latest baby Douroucoul born at West Midland Safari Park, snuggles up with father Ilay

LITTLE Lottie is the newest baby Douroucoul, otherwise known as Night Monkey or Owl Monkey, to be born in Twilight Cave, at West Midland Safari Park.

Lottie is the second Douroucoul to be born at the park. Barney was the first, arriving in November last year. Just like Barney, it is quite likely that little Lottie will be seen on father Ilay's back, as Douroucoul mothers generally relinquish their role after a few weeks. Park spokeswoman Wendy Jackson said there is still some uncertainty whether Lottie is male or female. She said: "It was the extraordinary prettiness of the baby that prompted the more feminine term, but it is still a case of wait and see."

Lottie and family can be seen in the Twilight Cave every weekend during the Wild Winter season up to Sunday, February 8 and daily until Christmas Eve.

IT was nid yw cefnogaeth i lawr — or no backing down — from a proud Black Country man as he took the chairmanship of a Welsh council.

Being the first Englishman to take the honour, Bernard Shaw faced a rebellion by Welsh speakers on Porthmadog Town Council but, determined to hear all views, he brought in a translator to help him communicate with his more stubborn colleagues.

The father-of-two, originally from Wordsley, eventually won over fellow members of the council at the Welsh harbour town and became a popular member of the community.

### Tax

Tributes have been paid to Mr Shaw, who died last week aged 82, after a battle against lung cancer.

He is survived by his wife of 58 years Hazel, his two children, Rebecca and Joanne, and four grandchildren.

Mr Shaw was a former head boy of Dudley Grammar School who did his National Service with The Green Howards in Germany.

As a child his family moved to Clarendon Road, Sedgley, and after school got job at the Inland Revenue in Dudley before becoming an inspector of taxes at Wolverhampton.

Mr Shaw was transferred to the Inland Revenue's office in Porthmadog and the family then started a new life in Wales, setting up



Bernard Shaw — proud of his Black Country roots

home in village of Borth-y-Gest. He later set up his own tax consultancy business. In 1974 he was elected to Porthmadog Town Council. Five years later he was elected as chairman of the council.

His brother-in-law Graham Gough said: "Even though he lived for many years in Wales he was still proud of his Black Country roots."

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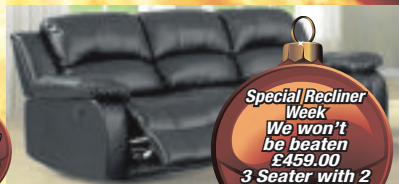
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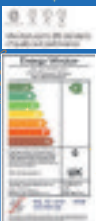
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## Women seeking men

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**KAREN** medium build, blonde hair, 5ft 5ins, seeks male, 50-58, GSOH, loving, caring and understanding. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 415429**

50 year old widow, love reading, walking, horse riding, clay shooting, swimming & keep fit, 5ft 5 blonde hair, gsoh looking for similar male. **Text Only Mailbox Box No: 4435776**

**23YR** old Asian female, seeks sugar daddy, any age for fun and much more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 415367**

**FEMALE** looking for male any age for fun, meet ups, friendship and take it from there. **Text Only Mailbox Box No: 4550576**

**YOUNG** looking female, likes rock music, concerts, theatre, seeks Rock male with similar interests for relationship. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 415249**

**MANDY** very attractive, slim single mum 36yrs, employed, OHAC, looking to share some quality times with similar genuine kind hearted social male/dad. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 415409**

**SOPHIA** young 40yrs, married but bored, seeks discreet adult fun, any area, all calls answered. **Tel No: 0905 002 1883 Box No: 413399**

**DIANE** attractive singleton seeks male to have some fun with, meals out, cinema, dancing and just see where things lead from there. Age/face unimportant. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 415373**

**LUCY**, 32yrs, blonde lady seeks naughty boys of any age for no strings fun. **Tel No: 0905 002 1887 Box No: 413443**

**SHELIA** Asian 20yr old female, very pretty, feminine with long hair, enjoys nights in or out, seeks mature white male, 55plus for discreet fun. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 415181**

**ADVENTUROUS** sexy lady, 38yrs, married but seeks no strings fun with discreet man, any age. I'm tall, slim and dominant. Aca. **Tel No: 0905 002 1937 Box No: 415301**

**MARGARET** 39, attractive active female likes animals, reading, meals in/out, seeking considerate partner for good laughs, companionship, shared interests and more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 414727**

**LUCY**, broadminded 18yrs seeks discreet fun with men any age. Aca. **Tel No: 0905 002 1941 Box No: 365051**

**KAREN** 50, widow, likes swimming, horse riding, keep fit, clay pigeon shooting, GSOH, N/S, non drinker, seeks male. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 415211**

**SEXY** brunette, mid 20's busty, adventurous broad minded seeks no strings fun. **Tel No: 0905 002 1949 Box No: 361739**

**BUBBLY** larger than life 28yr old blonde bombshell, seeks large built male to fulfil my every fantasy! Give me a call; I will totally make your day maybe even your year. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 414977**

**SALLY**, 38yrs large cuddly lady seeks slim men for discreet meetings. **Text Only 4550193**

**BARBARA** 38 slim sporty attractive blonde, varied interests, single and ready to date, seeks kind honest guy for shared interests, fun nights out, hopefully leading to more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 414967**

**TRUDY** 36yrs, wtm broadminded men of any age/area for daytime meetings. **Text Only 4550194**

**JULIE** single petite attractive big blue eyed brunette, loves cooking a cosy meal in, nights out, searching for real love with genuinely nice guy. Looks unimportant. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 414491**

**JEAN** petite female who enjoys golf, days out, cosy evenings in, holidays, WLTm older male in his 60's with a good personality and big heart. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 412359**

**MELANIE**, 38, slim, blonde and bored. Call if you want no strings fun. **Text Only 4550198**

**GOOD** looking professional lady, 56, enjoys the arts, country walks, meals out, seeks compatible, genuine, professional gent to enjoy the good things in life. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 415007**

**JENNI**, 52 bored housewife wants no strings fun with younger chap. **Text Only 4550197**

**ANGIE** 38yrs slim blonde, ex model with lovely long legs with shapely figure, fit, toned, sporty, confident but warm, WLTm similar perceptive, sensitive individual for it. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 414723**

**BECKY** stunning big blue eyed 38yr old honest, caring and fun person looking for nice times with similar outgoing fun guy, status/age unimportant. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 414391**

**68YR** old widow, attractive, seeks sincere, N/S male, likes reading, meals out and walks. West Midlands. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 414773**

**NICOLA** 32, blue eyes, petite, pretty brunette, shy at first, trustworthy, caring, varied hobbies, seeks male/single dad up to 40yrs for fit possible ltr. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 414707**

**TARA** 22 tall slim but curvy with legs that go all the way up to heaven, WLTm very appreciative confident male for adult fun. Contact me anytime. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 414701**

**KAREN** petite 34yr old attractive blonde, likes pubs, clubs, meals out, gym, looking for honest caring guy who can make me laugh. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 414373**

**ANN** looking for no strings adult fun, broadminded and great fun, blonde, attractive and discreet. Call me. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 414363**

## Men seeking women

**REMEMBER:** Calls cost £1.53 per minute plus network extras. Texts cost £1.50 per message sent.

**MALC** 50, seeking adventurous, spontaneous, sensual female, 50-65 for adult fun and good times. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 415253**

**SHAUN** 26 likes walking, singing, music, would like to meet someone my own age for friendship maybe relationship. **Text Only Mailbox Box No: 4567328**

**PHIL** 57, OHAC, discreet, seeks no strings fun with younger female. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 414991**

**ALAN** 49, seeks lady for discreet no strings fun. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 413757**

**GENUINE** guy looking for uncomplicated fun with lady up to 50 but only will answer all txt. **Text Only Mailbox Box No: 4202609**

**GARY** 6ft 2ins, dark hair, brown eyes, medium build, likes nights in/out, seeks female, 30-50. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 414845**

**PROFESSIONAL** male, 49 looking for fun and good times with voluptuous lady. **Text Only Mailbox Box No: 4574340**

**SLIM** male, 59, seeks no strings adult fun with broadminded mature woman, 65 plus. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 414983**

**JAMES**, hard working single dad, late 30's seeks single mum for family days out. **Text Only 4550196**

**ROY** 6ft 2ins, late 50's, seeks female. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 414775**

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**JOHN**, 42yrs professional genuine gent seeks caring lady to treat as a princess. **Text Only 4550195**

**SEAN** looking for female to share a coffee, pub, clubs and more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 414549**

**GENUINE** friendly, N/S professional, honest gent, medium build, GSOH, good heart essential, seeks equivalent lady, 45-60 for company and conversation. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 414311**

**MATURE** male, 6ft, GSOH, fit, active, loving, honest, N/S, seeks female with similar qualities. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 414261**

**TRUSTWORTHY** fit, active, caring, N/S, easy going male, 68, GSOH, seeks warm, genuine lady, 59-72 for LTR. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 414151**

**EXTREMELY** genuine! Life's true gent, 54, slim, 5ft 10ins, blue eyes, short hair, N/S, GSOH, seeks female, 41-52. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 413925**



Call today!

# Songsters and guests get ready for concert



Gentleman Songsters, school singers from Wall Heath and brass band musicians are rehearsing for the festive concert

**THAT festive feeling is on its way to Dudley Town Hall as the Gentlemen Songsters Choir gets ready to perform its Christmas charity concert.**

Rehearsals for the Saturday, December 13, concert are already in full swing and this year the Dudley borough's male voice choir will be joined by special guests Sovereign Brass.

The event at Dudley Town Hall will raise money for the Mayor of Dudley's chosen charities.

The Songsters will also be joined on stage by the children's choir from the School of the Church of the Ascension, Wall Heath, where the Songsters first formed back in 1957.

## Favourites

Hosting the concert will be Annie Hodgkinson, who has had leading roles with Brierley Hill Musical Theatre Company.

The Songsters say they are looking forward to thrilling the crowd with a wide variety of seasonal favourites that will be sure to get the audience into the festive spirit.

The Mayor of Dudley, Councillor Margaret Aston, will be at the event and all proceeds from the concert will be donated to her chosen charities.

These include Action Heart, the heart cardiac rehabilitation centre based in Dudley's Russells Hill Hospital, and Guide Dogs, formally known as the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association.

The concert will start at 7.30pm and tickets are priced at £10 each with reserved seating.

These can be purchased by calling (01384) 838863 or via the Midland Box Office on 0870 320 7000.

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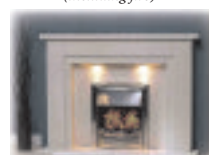
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Black Country favourites The Montanas had a hit in America and toured with The Troggs



The Californians — Robbie, Pete, John, Mick



The Crockers — John Oakley (front) with Doug Parker, Graham Hollis, Jake Elcock, Will Hayward, Roy Kent, Chris Groucutt, Ian Sludge Lees and Alan Clee



Big hair — the 1970s have arrived for the Light Fantastic



Wolverhampton band Finders Keepers

# Crock and roll with veterans of the 1960s Black Country music scene

THEY spent two decades gigging around the Midlands music scene, from Trysull Country Club to the legendary Lafayette, the musicians who make up Black Country supergroup The Crockers played them all.

For the past three years, the band have played a Christmas show at the Town Hall in Brierley Hill but this year they will be heading back to the city where it all began — Wolverhampton.

The Crockers are made up of members of popular bands who played around the Black Country, Birmingham and Staffordshire music scene in the 1960s and 70s, including The Montanas, Finders Keepers and Light Fantastic.

Despite never becoming a household name in Britain, other than in the West Midlands, The Montanas went on to have a minor hit in the States with You've Got To Be Loved and toured with The Troggs.

## MEMORY LANE

By Jon Pritchard

Jake Elcock, who played bass with Finders Keepers and The Montanas back in the day, said the group are looking forward to the gig at the Wulfrun Hall on Saturday, December 13.

He said: "This is the fourth year we have done this now and we are heading back to Wolverhampton where we all used to play."

"We all kept in touch because we became friends when we were all playing on the scene and then a few years ago we had this idea to play again. I didn't even have a guitar at the time."

"But the show actually sold out, so now we do a Christmas show every year. That's where we got the name from really. We're all getting on a bit so we're old crocks, but it's also a mixture of Christmas rockers, which is what we do."

The band is made up of Alan Clee, a lead

guitarist with Finders Keepers, Roy 'Dripper' Kent who was on vocals for Finders Keepers but also performed with Light Fantastic, Graham Hollis and Will Hayward both played with The Montanas, while John Oakley was the saxophonist for Revival.

Comedian Ian "Sludge" Lees, former singer with Light Fantastic and ex-member of The Montanas and The Telstars, will also perform with John O'Hara, vocalist with The Californians, and Graham Bunt, guitarist with Tommy.

The ten-strong band is completed by the sole youngster in the line-up. But Chris Groucutt, 26, has Black Country rock history behind him however, as he is the son of Kelly Groucutt, former bassist with the Electric Light Orchestra.

All of the band still live locally, in Wolverhampton, Gornal, Dudley and Sedgley, and Mr Elcock said they were looking forward to playing back in Wolverhampton.

Mr Elcock added: "We used to play venues like the Lafayette, Park Hall and the Cleveland Arms, which back then had live

music on about five nights a week.

"There were some great bands that played back then and the music scene was really good. Back in the 60s and 70 you could go out seven nights a week and there would always be four of five different venues with acts on."

"I remember we used to go to Trysull Country Park on a Tuesday and it wouldn't finish until 2am, and then we all had to get up and go to work then next morning. It was a very exciting time."

The Crockers play a mixture of 60s classics from The Beatles, The Rolling Stones and The Kinks, as well as songs by The Montanas, such as Ciao Baby and Let's Get a Little Sentimental.

There will also be entertainment from comedian Doug Parker, and David Essex tribute act Chris Knott to get the crowd going.

Tickets can be bought from www.wolves-civic.co.uk or by calling 0870 320 7000.

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# Dan's songs get back to the raw

**MUSICIAN** Dan Whitehouse talks to **DANNY FARRAGHER** about his music and the evolution of his new album

IT only took 10 days to lay down but Wolverhampton singer/songwriter Dan Whitehouse's latest album has been maturing for years.

Whitehouse, originally from Compton in the city, now works from the centre of Birmingham.

He has spent most of the last three years touring and building a steady reputation as a stand-out musician who takes his music very seriously.

"My song writing is always at the centre of my focus and that's what I spend the most time on. It's what makes me happy and is what drives me; keeps me in a positive mindset. Life is not worth living without music."

His latest album, *Raw State*, which was released on Monday and is officially launched at the Glee Club, Birmingham on Sunday, is not new in the conventional sense. There is only one fresh track but it has, according to Whitehouse, evolved as a process of his touring.

## Textures

"When we recorded the first few records they were written in the studio and we used multi-tracking and layering to add lots of textures and then I went and did two or three years touring those songs."

"During that time I felt the songs really took on a new form and evolved so then I felt like I had reached a point where I could walk into a studio and lay down raw versions of them."



Dan Whitehouse will be launching his new album, *Raw State*, at the Glee Club

"I think it brings a kind of vibrancy and life and energy something akin to what you might get from the live show."

"This is an album I have carved out. It's like a sculpture that has taken five years and this is the end result. I started out with a big lump of rock and now I am really proud of that sculpture, it's kind of distorted and imperfection but I am really proud of it."

So is the process ever fully finished for him?

"No, I am always hungry and looking for the next level. There are always other places to go, that's the great thing about music there are always people who inspire and there are al-

ways more things to learn and more things to discover. I try not rest on my laurels because I still feel there are songs I want to write and still places, artistically, that I haven't ventured into."

Whitehouse has been touring mostly with New York singer, author and poet Simone Felice who he met through the Glee Club and now things seem to have come full circle now for him.

"This gig at the Glee is the biggest capacity venue I have ever played, it can hold more than 400 so is very ambitious."

"It's going to be a kind of Christmas extravaganza with special guests."

# Heat on as Heaton carries on regardless

**Paul Heaton and Jacqui Abbot**  
**Civic Hall, Wolverhampton**

IT was a night of nostalgia, elephant wee, a rather unsavoury tale of Paul Heaton's, and trying to prise him out of his parka.

Even with the temperature reaching sauna levels through the solid wall of bodies packed into the Civic Hall and the shouts of "off off" couldn't separate Heaton from his jacket so the assembled mass had to make do

with the music which is now part of pop history. Heaton via the Housemartins and then The Beautiful South has been on the scene for more than a quarter of a century with Jacqui Abbot not far behind him.

The duo walked in over the drumbeat and launched into a couple of tracks off their latest album, *What Have We Become*, with *Moulding of a Fool* and *The Right in Me*. They then took their first trip down memory lane

with *We're Not Deep* from Heaton's Housemartins days.

The crowd lapped up the old stuff with their cover of Everybody's Talking, the expletive ridden *Don't Marry Her* and of course *Carry On Regardless*.

Heaton even threw in a spoiler as they are *Pointless* celebrities on December 13 but you have to watch it to see how they did.

Danny Farragher

## Got to give Erasure a little respect

**Erasure, Civic Hall, Wolverhampton**

AFTER nearly 30 years in the business, you have to give A Little Respect to Erasure.

The duo have re-invented themselves for 21st century audiences, hence *Sacred* (from new album *The Violet Flame*) sounding like it could be by Calvin Harris rather than Vince Clarke. Latest single *Reason, Elevation* and *Dead of Night* were also from the new album.

Singer Andy Bell came out on stage wearing hat, jacket and shades but he later changed into spangly hot pants. He loves a good Drama! So did I. And *Blue Savannah*. And *Ship of Fools*. The latter demonstrated that Clarke is not just a whizz on the keyboards as he played guitar, repeating the feat for final encore *Sometimes*.

From the opening *Oh L'Amour*, the sell-out crowd were clearly in for a top night. Pretty much all the hits were there, *Victim of Love*, *Chains of Love*, *Stop!* and *Love To Hate You* among them. **Mark Shipp**

## REVIEWS



First Soloist Samara Downs leaps into action as The Snow Fairy in *The Nutcracker*

# Enchanting festive ballet just gets better and better

**The Nutcracker, Birmingham Hippodrome**  
IN the 24 years since Sir Peter Wright's version of the classic Russian ballet received its premiere in Birmingham, this Christmas treat from Birmingham Royal Ballet has just got better and better.

It begins with an idealised Christmas and ballet student Clara has a wildly imaginative dream. The scene in which Clara is shrunk by the growing Christmas tree is spectacular. Then she is whisked away in a blizzard of dancing snowflakes to an enchanted land of dance. Tchaikovsky's romantic music with opulent costumes and

monumental sets that radiate a faded grandeur, all dramatically lit, create an otherworldly atmosphere.

On Saturday Laura Purkiss ensured Clara was never lost amid the spectacle. Samara Downs brought verve to The Snow Fairy and Spanish dancer, Delia Matthews was liquid lithe in the supple Arabian Dance, whilst Momoko Hirata combined grace and strength as The Rose Fairy.

The star couple were Celine Gittens and Tyrone Singleton, as the Sugar Plum Fairy and Prince. Their Grand pas de deux was elegant and powerful. The Nutcracker continues until December 13. **LB**

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# Birmingham Dogs' Home has a long and notable history in the care and protection of rescuing strays from the city streets of Birmingham and surrounding towns and villages in the West Midlands.

It was founded in 1892 on land that was made available by the late Sir Alfred Gooch Bart in New Canal Street, Birmingham, and proudly displayed the heading 'Birmingham Home for Lost and Starving Dogs' above its doors, a sign that is still present on the building, having been restored by its current owners.

Almost 100 years later - in 1987 - the Duchess of York officially opened the New Bartholomew Street home, which had been purpose-built to provide shelter and protection for over 150 abandoned dogs in comfortable kennel blocks with adjacent facilities, such as its own vets' clinic, puppy unit and isolation block.

The home is a charity which can only survive through the generosity and support of the general public and

benefactors from the local community. Without this we would be unable to carry on the vital work of rescuing and rehoming abandoned dogs.

## Rescued

**We at Birmingham Dogs' Home are here primarily to ensure that the abandoned dogs coming into our care are rescued from their plight, reunited with owners who may have lost them or rehomed to families that will respect and nurture them.**

Our **rehoming procedure** is designed and operated principally to be both practical and fair. It takes into consideration the high number of dogs brought into our homes on a daily and weekly basis as well as our desire to find the best possible home for each individual dog in our care.

The public are free to walk around our homes to view our dogs at any time during our opening hours of Monday to Saturday 11am - 4.45pm, but they should be aware that not all dogs are available for rehoming. Some are stray dogs due to be claimed by their owners while others are under assessment by our staff for either medical or behavioural concerns.

Once you have spent time with one of our dogs and are satisfied that you would like to offer the dog a home, our rehoming staff will take you through the various stages required to complete the process. No pressure is placed on anyone to offer a dog a home. We do stress, however, to anyone considering this option that they must take as much time necessary before deciding to reserve a dog in our care.

## Abandoned

Your help brings hope and happy tomorrows for abandoned dogs

Fundraising is the life's blood of Birmingham Dogs' Home. Without it we simply could not exist.

With no Government funding, we survive purely through the generous contributions of the general public, interested companies, groups, organisations and kind-hearted individuals who may or may not have purchased dogs from us and have remembered us in their Wills.

Legacies and other contributions are valued beyond compare and allow us to carry on providing care and protection for unwanted dogs.

This ensures that we can continue to rescue these unfortunate animals, oversee their welfare and good health and treat any conditions with first class veterinary attention all with one aim in mind ... to see them happily rehomed to loving new families.

Our highly trained kennel team do the rest with loving pastoral care prior to their four-legged charges leaving for pastures new.

There are various fundraising routes available for those who wish to donate. Whichever, we at Birmingham Dogs' Home are deeply indebted to those of you who work so tirelessly to help us help them ...



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## Blessed start to seasonal music

THE man with the biggest beard after Father Christmas, Brian Blessed, will be bringing his extra large personality and voice to greet the festive season at Birmingham.

The popular actor will be giving readings at the Christmas Classics concert at the Symphony Hall on Saturday, December 20, at 2pm. Bach, Mozart, Pearsall and carols will feature in the concert involving guest soprano Elizabeth Atherton with the City of Birmingham Choir and London Concert Orchestra.

The Carols By Candlelight concert at the same venue that evening will include the Mozart Festival Orchestra in period costume and the Canzonetta choir. See [www.thsh.co.uk](http://www.thsh.co.uk) or call 0121 345 0603.

## Rockers return to play this weekend

BIRMINGHAM rock legends Magnum promote album *Escape* from the Shadow Garden at Bilton's Robin 2 tomorrow (Friday). The same venue hosts ex-Marillion frontman Fish on Monday and a Compton Hospice charity concert featuring Dudley's former The Voice finalist Jenny Jones on Tuesday.

The Human League are at Wolverhampton Civic Hall tomorrow, when ex-Rainbow singer Graham Bonnett rocks Birmingham O2 Academy. Rockabilly queen Imelda May is at Digbeth's Institute on Saturday, while in another room Turbowolf lead Download Freezes Over.

# Hootenanny time comes early with Jools and his orchestra

## Niki has a Grand fairy role

FORMER X Factor star Niki Evans is gearing up to appear in pantomime at Wolverhampton's Grand Theatre for the fourth time.

The singer, who reached the semi finals of the TV talent show in 2007, says she cannot wait to return to the city for the festive season. This year she will be appearing as the Fairy Godmother in *Cinderella*. This year she will be starring alongside Julian Clary and Joe Tracini, son of Joe Pasquale.

"It has become bit of a Christmas tradition for me," said Niki, who was born in Birmingham and now lives in Tamworth.

"I love getting glittered up and into costume, seeing how much it excites the kids is my favourite part."

Thousands of tickets have already been sold for the panto, which opens on Saturday and runs until January 18.



Singer Niki Evans is starring in pantomime *Cinderella* at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

## BOOGIE woogie big band maestro Jools Holland has a double date with Birmingham in the run up to Christmas with special guests Marc Almond and Rumer.

The piano man's latest tour comes hot on the heels of his new album *Sirens of Song* (released by East West), in which Jools and his Rhythm and Blues Orchestra team up with several leading female singers.

The 14-track recording includes two regular singers with his band, Oldham-born Louise Marshall and Birmingham's own Ruby Turner, plus on the bluesy *Lost Mind*, the velvet-voiced Rumer who will be joining Jools and co at the Symphony Hall on Wednesday and Thursday, December 17 and 18.

Other contributions to the album include one of the last recordings by jazz legend Eartha Kitt, *Ain't Misbehavin'* from a Later show in 2008, and the late Amy Winehouse in stomping reggae mode with *Monkey Man* from the Hootenanny show in 2006.

Highlights among newer recordings include Birmingham soul singer Laura Mvula's stylish take on *See Line Woman*, Emeli Sande on jazz standard *Love Me Or Leave Me*, Melanie C's version of Stevie Wonder's *I Wish* and a radical New Orleans style makeover for *Clash song Should I Stay Or Should I Go* by Kylie and Jools. Sometime mem-



Jools Holland leads his band

ber of his band, Joss Stone, also contributes *Letting Me Down*, which she co-wrote with Jools.

Some of these songs plus a lot of jazz, soul and reggae standards are likely to feature when Jools brings his feel-good show to the venue. Tickets cost £36 plus transaction fee. See [www.thsh.co.uk](http://www.thsh.co.uk) or call 0121 345 0600.

Meanwhile, former Soft Cell frontman Marc Almond will also be in concert in his own right at Birmingham Town Hall on April 17 as part of his *Velvet Trail* tour for his forthcoming album.

## Festive folk bring Christmas shows

WOLVERHAMPTON'S Dan Whitehouse will be launching his new album, *Raw State*, at his Christmas show at the Glee Club, Birmingham on Sunday. Dan will be joined by Chris Tye, Harriet Harkcom and Duke Special. The show starts 8pm and tickets are £8 plus booking fee.

Barnsley nightingale Kate Rusby is bringing her annual festive show to the Symphony Hall, Birmingham on Thursday December 11. The show starts 7.30pm and tickets are £25 plus transactions fees.

The festivities continue when Maddy Prior brings her carols and capers show to Birmingham Town Hall on Sunday, December 14. The show starts at 7.30pm and tickets are £19.50 plus fees. See [www.thsh.co.uk](http://www.thsh.co.uk)

## Cool Yule with Rat Pack Vegas show

START the festivities with a ring-a-ding-ding time at the Christmas with the Rat Pack Live from Las Vegas Show this week.

The tribute to Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin and Sammy Davis Jr starts a three-night (and Saturday matinee) run at the New Alexandra Theatre in Birmingham tonight (Thursday) with the Burrelli Sisters and Rat Pack Big Band. It puts a festive twist on the cool crooner sounds of the 1950s and 60s, so expect *Baby It's Cold Outside* and *White Christmas*.

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## CHOICE



Miranda Hart

**The Jonathan Ross Show (TV, 10.35pm)**

In case you've been oblivious to the adverts, posters and pop-up ads, Peter Jackson's final part of his Hobbit trilogy is about to hit cinemas. While the source material may not have demanded such an epic saga, The Hobbit has given Martin Freeman one of the best roles of his career as Bilbo Baggins. This week he drops into the studio to discuss The Battle of the Five Armies, while the most controversial man on four wheels, Jeremy Clarkson, will no doubt be discussing the recent farrago in Argentina. Plus, funnywoman Miranda Hart and X Factor veteran Ella Henderson also lend their considerable talents to the proceedings.

## BBC1

**6.00 Breakfast.** **11.00** Saturday Kitchen Live. **11.30** Tom Kerridge's Proper Pub Food. **(R) 12.00** BBC News; Weather. **12.10** Football Focus. **1.00** Live Snooker: UK Championship. Coverage of the first semi-final at the Barbican Centre in York. **4.30** Final Score. **5.25** Celebrity Mastermind. **(R) 5.55** BBC News; Regional News; Weather.

**6.10 Pointless Celebrities.** Alexander Armstrong quizzes eight writers – Charlie Higson, Rachel Johnson, Robert Harris, Gill Hornby, Jenny Colgan, Benjamin Zephaniah, Danny Wallace and Stuart Maconie.

**7.00 Strictly Come Dancing.** Tess Daly and Claudia Winkleman present the quarter-final of the ballroom battle as the remaining six pro-celebrity couples take another few dance steps closer to lifting the glitterball trophy. Len Goodman, Bruno Tonioli, Craig Revel Horwood and Darcey Bussell provide their opinions and scores, which are combined with the votes of the viewers to decide which two couples will appear in tomorrow night's dreaded dance-off.

**8.15 Atlantis.** Ariadne sets out on a journey for Telemón's homeland of Aegina, despite Jason's concerns for his queen's safety – and before long the royal procession faces enemies at every turn.

**9.00 Casualty.** Ash disagrees with Dylan on how to treat a suspected overdose, Zoe gets annoyed with Cal for flirting with her patient and the paramedics receive a mysterious hamper for Jeff.

**9.50 The National Lottery Live.** Jenni Falconer is joined by singer Katherine Jenkins as she reveals the numbers for the Lotto and Thunderball draws.

**10.00 BBC News; Weather.** **10.20 Match of the Day.** Gary Lineker presents highlights of the latest Premier League clashes, including Newcastle United v Chelsea at St James' Park and Stoke City v Arsenal at the Britannia Stadium; National Lottery Update.

**11.45 The Football League Show.** Manish Bhasin presents highlights and all the goals from the latest fixtures.

**12.25 Film: AWOL: Absent Without Leave.** (1990) **2.05** Weather for the Week Ahead. **2.10** BBC News.

## BBC2

**6.00 CBBC.** **11.00** The Blue Planet. (R) **12.00** Rick Stein's Far Eastern Odyssey. (R) **1.00** The Rockford Files. (R) **1.45 Film: The Great Caruso.** (1951) Musical biopic of opera singer Enrico Caruso, starring Mario Lanza. **3.30** Flog It! (R) **4.30** Live Snooker: UK Championship. Further coverage of the first semi-final at the Barbican Centre in York. **5.30** Restoring England's Heritage.

**6.00 Secrets of the Castle with Ruth, Peter and Tom.** This edition focuses on the surprisingly colourful world of medieval interior design, with Peter Ginn and Tom Pinfold rendering and lime-washing the inside walls of a guard tower, transforming its dark stone walls into a bright space. Ruth Goodman makes paint and decorates the castle bedchamber using designs based on those recently discovered at an 11th-century church nearby, and Peter gets to grips with the indoor toilets known as garderobes. (R)

**7.00 Live Snooker: UK Championship.** Hazel Irvine presents all the action from the second semi-final at the Barbican Centre in York, where the first player to win six frames will book their place in tomorrow's final. This is the second most prestigious ranking tournament on the calendar and one that has produced a remarkable series of champions in recent years, with the last eight events being won by a different player. Subsequent programmes subject to change.

**10.00 Tomorrow's Worlds: The Uneasily History of Science Fiction.** Dominic Sandbrook examines sci-fi's obsession with creating artificial life, looking at examples from Doctor Who, The Terminator, Blade Runner, Battlestar Galactica and The Matrix.

**11.00 Intruders.** Jack discovers the alarming scope of the organisation to which he has lost Amy, Marcus and Madison engage in a fatal struggle, and Richard goes on the run. Last in the series.

**11.45 Film: Night and the City.** (1992) A small-time lawyer becomes a boxing promoter, only to fall foul of gangsters who stand to lose money on his fighters. Thriller remake, starring Robert De Niro and Jessica Lange.

**1.25 Film: Beyond the Fire.** (2009) **2.40** This Is BBC Two.

## ITV

**6.00 CITV: The Aquabats!** Super Show! **6.25** Pat & Stan. (R) **6.35** Pat & Stan. (R) **6.40** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **6.50** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **7.05** Canimals. (R) **7.10** Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) **7.15** Sooty. (R) **7.25** Mr Bean: The Animated Series. (R) **7.40** Text Santa: Little Helpers. (R) **7.45** Matt Hatter Chronicles. **8.10** Text Santa: Little Helpers. (R) **8.15** Horrid Henry. **8.30** The Munch Box. **9.25** Dinner Date. (R) **10.20** Murder, She Wrote. (R) **11.15** ITV News; Weather.

**11.25 Storage Hoarders.** (R) **12.25** Countrywise. (R) **12.55** Doc Martin. (R) **2.00** Keep It in the Family. (R) **3.00** Film: Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets. (2002)

**6.00 Regional Programme;** Weather. **6.15** ITV News; Weather.

**6.30 New You've Been Framed!** Comedy with Harry Hill, inspired by viewers' videos, featuring elaborate pranks, a cat terrorising a postman and an accident at the top of the Eiffel Tower.

**7.00 The Chase: Celebrity Special.** I'm a Celebrity 2013 winner Kian Egan, former Olympic swimmer Sharron Davies, presenter Matt Johnson and actor Larry Lamb play for charity. Bradley Walsh hosts. Last in the series.

**8.00 The X Factor.** The acts have been in rehearsals all week and now the time has come for them to show the voting public why they deserve a place in next week's final. Dermot O'Leary hosts. The results are tomorrow at 8pm.

**9.30 I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out of Here!** Ant and Dec present highlights from the past 24 hours in the jungle and reveal which celebrity has fallen at the last hurdle, missing out on a place in the final.

**10.35 The Jonathan Ross Show.** The host is joined by Top Gear presenter Jeremy Clarkson, comedy actress Miranda Hart and The Hobbit star Martin Freeman, and former X Factor contestant Ella Henderson performs.

**11.40 ITV News; Weather.** **11.55 Film: Play Misty for Me.** (1971) A DJ revives his relationship with an old flame, driving an obsessive fan mad with jealousy. Psychological thriller, directed by and starring Clint Eastwood, with Jessica Walter.

**1.40 Jackpot247.** **3.00** The Jeremy Kyle Show USA. (R) **3.45** ITV Nightscreen.

## CHANNEL 4

**6.05** Great Ethiopian Run. **7.00** FIM Superbike World Championship. **8.00** The Morning Line. **9.00** Weekend Kitchen. **10.00** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **10.30** Frasier. (R) **10.55** Frasier. (R) **11.25** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **11.55** The Simpsons. (R) **12.20** Marvel's Agents of SHIELD. (R) **1.20** Channel 4 Racing. Live coverage from Sandown Park and Aintree. **4.00** Come Dine with Me. (R) **4.30** Come Dine with Me. (R) **5.00** Come Dine with Me. (R) **5.35** Come Dine with Me. (R)

**6.00 Come Dine with Me.** Fun-loving salesman Charlie Spiteri hosts the final festive dinner party in south-east London. A stylish offering of oysters and champagne on arrival impresses his guests, but the cook encounters problems with an angry three-bird roast.

However, he hopes his snow machine and festive capers will be enough for him to take the £1,000 prize. (R)

**6.30 Channel 4 News.**

**7.00 Inside Rolls-Royce.** A behind-the-scenes look at the exclusive and luxurious world of the renowned British car brand, following workers at the manufacturer's Goodwood factory as they build their most expensive bespoke car to date, the Celestial Phantom, which comes complete with diamond-studded interior. The programme reveals the craftsmanship that goes into making and selling vehicles with a huge price tag and the lengths to which the team will go in the pursuit of perfection. (R)

**8.00 Film: Battleship.** (2012) Premiere. A reckless slacker joins the Navy, hoping to win the respect of his girlfriend's father, a stern admiral. He and his shipmates are put to the ultimate test as part of a force of vessels that must battle an invading fleet of powerful alien spaceships. Sci-fi adventure, starring Taylor Kitsch, Liam Neeson and Alexander Skarsgard.

**10.35 Film: From Dusk Till Dawn.** (1996) A pair of outlaws take a family hostage and then lie low in a Mexican strip club, which turns out to be infested with vampires. Horror, starring George Clooney and Harvey Keitel.

**12.40 Film: The Talent Mr Ripley.** (1999) **3.05** Holyoaks. (R) **5.15** A Place in the Sun: Home or Away. (R)

## CHANNEL 5

**6.00 Milkshake!** **9.55** Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. (R) **10.30** Film: Santa Jr. (2002) Christmas comedy, starring Nick Stabile. **12.15** Film: Meet the Santas. (2005) Fantasy comedy sequel, with Steve Guttenberg. **1.55** Film: Hats Off to Christmas! (2013) Romantic drama, with Haylie Duff and Antonio Cupo. **3.40** Film: Mrs Miracle. (2009) A talented housekeeper helps a widowed father of twin boys to turn his life around and rediscover his love of music. Family drama, starring Boris Roberts and James Van Der Beek. **5.35** Film: Noel. (2004) Drama, starring Susan Sarandon.

**7.25 Britain's Craziest Christmas Lights.** Former Slade frontman Noddy Holder narrates a documentary following four househunters as they turn their homes into electric winter wonderlands with extensive displays of festive illuminations. For these Christmas obsessives, who include Dave and Carol Edwards, putting up the lights involves a head for heights, DIY wiring skills and an unshakable resolve, with some inspired by the bling of Blackpool while others aim for the ambitious scale of a West End show. (R)

**8.25 5 News Weekend.**

**8.30 Film: Rocky Balboa.** (2006) The aging fighter contemplates a return to the ring when a computer simulation reveals he would have defeated the current world heavyweight champion Mason "The Line" Dixon, who responds by challenging Rocky to face him for real. Boxing drama sequel, directed by and starring Sylvester Stallone.

**10.30 Film: Pale Rider.** (1985) A mysterious preacher with lethal gunfighting skills helps a mining community battle a ruthless landowner. Western, directed by and starring Clint Eastwood.

**12.40 SuperCasino.** Viewers get the chance to take part in live interactive gaming, with a mix of roulette-wheel spins and lively chat from the presenting team. **3.10** Gotham. Gordon and Bullock investigate a deadly fight club where the winners are awarded a job, while Bruce learns a difficult lesson when he tries to make friends at school. (R) **4.00** House Doctor. Ann Maurice offers advice to a bachelor having trouble selling his home in Knutsford, Cheshire, because it is too modern. (R) **4.25** Make It Big. (R) **5.15** Angels of Jarm. (R) **5.40** Roary the Racing Car. (R)

## DIGITAL

**BBC Three** **7.00** Doctor Who **8.00** Top Gear **9.00** Sherlock **10.30** Bad Education **11.00** Family Guy **1.30** Life is Toff **2.00** Sweat the Small Stuff **2.30** Some Girls **3.00** Bad Education **3.30** Parents' Evening **4.00** Close

**BBC Four** **7.00** Ice Age Giants **8.00** Sex and Sensibility: The Allure of Art Nouveau **9.00** Inspector Montalbano **10.55** Billy Joel: The Bridge to Arizona – A Matter of Trust **12.00** Billy Joel: Live in Leningrad **1.20** Top of the Pops: 1979 **2.00** Ice Age Giants **3.00** Sex and Sensibility: The Allure of Art Nouveau **4.00** Close

**ITV2** **12.00** The Cube: Celebrity Special **1.00** Totally You've Been Framed! **2.05** Film: Rumor Has It (2005) **4.00** I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out of Here! **5.30** Film: She's the Man (2006) **7.40** Film: The Scorpion King (2002) **9.30** The Xtra Factor **10.35** I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out of Here Now! **11.35** The X Factor **1.05** The Xtra Factor **2.00** Two and a Half Men **2.45** Kiez: The Hot Desk **2.55** Teleshopping **5.55** ITV2 Nightscreen

**ITV3** **12.50** Film: Columbo: Negative Reaction (1974) **2.50** Agatha Christie's Marple **7.00** Rosemary & Thyme **8.00** Doc Martin **9.00** Foyle's Men **11.00** A Journey of Frost **1.05** Bomb Girls **1.55** ITV3 Nightscreen **2.30** Teleshopping

**ITV4** **11.15** Alias Smith and Jones **12.25** The Professionals **1.30** Live Tennis. The St. Pauli Masters Tennis. **4.30** Cheers **5.00** Alias Smith and Jones **6.00** Storage Wars **7.30** Live Tennis. The St. Pauli Masters Tennis. **10.30** Film: The Living Daylights (1987) **1.15** Journey to Le Mans **2.15** Tommy Cooper **2.45** ITV4 Nightscreen **3.00** Teleshopping

**E4** **11.00** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **12.00** How I Met Your Mother **1.00** Melissa & Joey **3.00** Made in Chelsea **4.00** Rude (ish) Tube **6.00** The Big Bang Theory **9.00** Film: The Waterboy (1998) **10.50** Rude Tube **11.55** The Inbetweeners **1.00** How I Met Your Mother **2.00** The Cleveland Show **3.15** Franklin & Bash **3.55** Happy Endings **4.20** My Fair Wedding

**Film4** **11.00** The Belles of St Trinian's (1954) **1.00** The Hunt for Red October (1990) **3.45** The King and I (1956) **6.25** The Way We Live Now (2010) **9.00** Solomon Kane (2010) **11.05** Heat (1995) **2.20** Shutter (2008) **4.00** Close

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## CHOICE



Ant and Dec

### I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out of Here!

**(ITV, 9pm)**  
Back in 2002, the powers that be at ITV first discussed the seemingly absurd idea of taking a handful of headline-grabbing celebrities, cutting off their home comforts and throwing them in to the middle of a beastie-inhabited Australian jungle. 'It'll never work' cried a groaning public. But 12 years, and 14 series, down the line, and we're just about ready to crown our new jungle winner. This time last year, we were having trouble making the call between singer Kian Egan and fashion designer David Emanuel after an eventful few weeks watching the holed-up celebs. This time around, we've seen tears and tantrums, expletives-filled bush trucker trials and too many naff jokes to count from Ant and Dec (we love them really).

## BBC1

**6.00 Breakfast.** 7.35 Match of the Day. (R) **9.00 The Andrew Marr Show.** 10.00 Fern Britton meets Nicholas Parsons. **11.00 Sunday Politics.** 12.15 MOTD2 Extra. With Mark Chapman and the Match of the Day team. **1.00 BBC News.** Weather. **1.15 Bargain Hunt.** (R) **1.45 FA Cup Final Score.** 4.20 Songs of Praise. **4.55 Christmas Supermarket Secrets.** (R) **5.55 BBC News.** Regional News. **6.20 Countryfile.** The team reports from East Sussex, where Helen Skelton discovers the secrets of the mysterious shepherd's stones and goes on a fossil hunt with local schoolchildren, finding the footprints of what's believed to be a dinosaur. John Craven takes a stroll round the grounds of Batmans, a country house where writer Rudyard Kipling sought solace and peace, and new presenter Joe Crowley joins a team from the Sussex Wildlife Ambulance service as they are called out to a stag in distress. **Ant and Dec** Ant and Dec explore how science is being used to detect animal diseases early and Tom Heap finds out about the return of the British beaver in Devon. **7.20 Strictly Come Dancing: The Results.** Tess Daly and Claudia Winkleman reveal which couples are guaranteed a place in the semi-final and which two have to face each other in the dance-off. OneRepublic provide the music. **8.00 Antiques Roadshow.** The team visits Waltham Forest Town Hall in east London, where items include a Rolex with a connection to Britain's Special Forces and the world's oldest hot cross bun. **9.00 Remember Me.** Di Fairholme joins Hannah to search for Tom, finding him at a caravan park – but he still refuses to be drawn on the significance of the song Scarborough Fair. **10.00 BBC News.** Regional News; Weather. **10.30 Match of the Day 2.** Mark Chapman reviews the latest Premier League action. **11.35 The Apprentice.** The entrepreneurs are challenged to find and buy nine items – all of which have featured in tasks throughout the history of the show – at the best possible prices. (R) **12.35 Film:** Racing for Time. (2008) **2.00 Weather for the Week Ahead.** 2.05 BBC News.

## BBC2

**6.15 Great British Garden Revival.** (R) **7.15 Countryfile.** (R) **8.15 Glorious Gardens from Above.** (R) **9.00 The Football League Show.** (R) **9.40 50 Golden Years of Sport on BBC Two.** (R) **10.40 Saturday Kitchen: Best Bites.** **12.10 The A to Z of TV Cooking.** (R) **12.55 Live Snooker: UK Championship.** The opening session of the final at the Barbican Centre in York. **6.00 MOTD: FA Cup Highlights.** Manish Bhasin presents action from the latest second-round matches, as the non-league sides aimed to make a name for themselves and book a place in the third round, and a potential tie against a Premier League club. **7.00 Live Snooker: UK Championship.** Hazel Irvine introduces coverage of the second session of the final at the Barbican Centre in York, where the first player to reach 10 frames will be crowned champion. Mark Selby led Neil Robertson heading into the concluding session of last year's final, but the Jester from Leicester had no answer to his Australian opponent, who recorded another two century breaks on his way to winning the tournament for the first time. The commentary team features Dennis Taylor, Ken Doherty, Steve Davis, John Virgo, John Parrott and Stephen Hendry. **11.00 Russell Howard's Good News.** The comedian offers his perspective on stories dominating the media, whether on television, online or in print, and he is joined by a guest with an amazing tale to tell. (R) **11.30 Film: The British Guide to Showing Off.** (2011) Premiere. Part-animated documentary about Andrew Logan's Alternative Miss World show, celebrating some of the most memorable contestants featured over the 40 years of the event. **1.05 Sign Zone.** Countryfile. John Craven uncovers one of Lancashire's hidden jewels. (R) **2.00 Holly City.** Jesse faces up to the consequences of his womanising ways, Zosia grapples with a patient harbouring a secret and the Holly board tries to impose force cost-cutting measures. (R) **3.00 This Is the Life.** Two. Preview of upcoming programmes from BBC Two.

## ITV

**6.00 CITV:** The Aquabats! Super Show! **6.25 Pat & Stan.** (R) **6.35 Pat & Stan.** (R) **6.40 Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures.** (R) **6.50 Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures.** (R) **7.05 Canimals.** (R) **7.10 Signed Stories: Share a Story.** (R) **7.15 Sooty.** **7.25 Mr Bean: The Animated Series.** (R) **7.40 Text Santa: Little Helpers.** (R) **7.45 Ultimate Spider-Man.** **8.10 Text Santa: Little Helpers.** (R) **8.15 Horrid Henry.** **8.30 Big Time Rush.** **9.00 The Aquabats! Super Show!** (R) **9.25 Dickinson's Real Deal.** (R) **10.25 Murder, She Wrote.** (R) **11.25 ITV News.** Weather. **11.35 Film: Batteries Not Included.** (1987) **1.30 All Star Family Fortunes.** (R) **2.30 The X Factor.** (R) **4.00 Film: Apollo 13.** (1995) Fact-based drama, starring Tom Hanks. **6.35 Regional Programme:** Weather. **6.45 ITV News:** Weather. **7.00 Coronation Street.** Hour-long episode. A desperate Kylie sets off to find Callum after running out of drugs, while Eva agrees to take a worried David to his wife's old haunt the Dog & Gun. Kal is furious that Tony is exploiting Zedden when he should be with his family. Luke comes to the rescue after Maria accidentally stabs herself in the eye with a mascara wand, and Tim worries he's going to have to pull out of the school auction as his reading just isn't up to it. Katy confides in Alya that she reckons Gary and Izzy are getting back together, and Owen unwittingly lets slip to Diane that Kevin gave her sofa to Sally. **8.00 The X Factor Results.** The remaining contestants wait with bated breath as Dermot O'Leary reveals who is safe and which acts will be battling it out in the sing-off for a place in next week's final. **9.00 I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out of Here!** It's the final to what has been an eventful three weeks in the Australian jungle, full of terrifying trials, sleepless nights and stomach-churning meals, and the celebrities who have gone all the way will now be looking forward to catching a plane home. Last in the series. **10.30 ITV News:** Weather. **10.45 Film: I Now Pronounce You Chuck & Larry.** (2007) Comedy, with Adam Sandler. **12.50 The Store.** 2.35 Motorsport UK. (R) 3.25 The Jeremy Kyle Show USA. (R) 4.10 ITV Nightscreen. 5.05 The Jeremy Kyle Show. (R)

## CHANNEL 4

**6.10 NFL: The American Football Show.** (R) **7.05 How I Met Your Mother.** (R) **7.30 How I Met Your Mother.** (R) **7.55 Frasier.** (R) **8.30 Small Animal Hospital.** **9.00 Jamie's Comfort Food.** (R) **9.30 Sunday Brunch.** **12.30 The Big Bang Theory.** (R) **1.00 The Big Bang Theory.** (R) **1.30 The Big Bang Theory.** (R) **1.55 The Simpsons.** (R) **2.25 The Simpsons.** (R) **2.50 Film: Stardust.** (2007) Fantasy adventure, starring Charlie Cox and Claire Danes. **5.25 Film: Home Alone 2: Lost in New York.** (1992) Comedy sequel, starring Macaulay Culkin. **7.45 Channel 4 News.** **8.00 The Billion Pound Base: Dismantling Camp Bastion.** For eight years, Britain's biggest overseas base since the Second World War has been the powerhouse of UK and US military operations in Afghanistan, and now Camp Bastion has closed down for good. A town the size of Reading with a massive infrastructure, including an airport, hospital and fast-food restaurants, has been dismantled bolt by bolt – a huge project that faced a constant threat from the Taliban as defences and manpower depleted daily. This documentary follows the men and women assigned to the task. **9.00 Homeland.** Carrie is forced to improvise to salvage her mission, while the CIA swiftly closes in on a leak. Claire Danes, Rupert Friend and Mandy Patinkin star in the American thriller. **10.00 Film: Sinister.** (2012) Premiere. A writer researching a horrific incident that took place in his house years previously uncovers a supernatural threat. Horror, starring Ethan Hawke. **12.05 Alan Carr: Chatty Man.** The host is joined by entertainer Bruce Forsyth, comedian Lee Evans and singer-songwriter George Ezra, who performs his latest single Listen to the Man. (R) **1.00 American Football Live.** San Diego Chargers v New England Patriots (Kick-off 1.30am). Coverage of the week 14 clash from Qualcomm Stadium, where the AFC West and AFC East teams face each other. **4.45 NFL: Rush Zone.** Animation about a young American football fan who must protect shards of a power source called The Core, which is hidden in various NFL stadiums. **5.10 Win It Cook It.** (R) **5.35 Countdown.** Alistair McGowan joins Nick Hever and Rachel Riley for the words-and-numbers game. (R)

## CHANNEL 5

**6.00 Milkshake!** Peppa Pig. **6.05 Roary the Racing Car.** (R) **6.15 Angelina Ballerina: The Next Steps.** (R) **6.30 Pip Ahoy!** (R) **6.40 The Mr Men Show.** (R) **6.55 Chloe's Closet.** (R) **7.05 Bananas in Pyjamas.** (R) **7.20 Make Way for Noddy.** (R) **7.30 Pav Patrol.** **7.45 Little Princess.** (R) **7.55 The Adventures of Bottle Top Bill and His Best Friend Corky.** (R) **8.10 Wanda and the Alien.** **8.20 Zack and Quack.** **8.35 Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom.** (R) **8.55 Jelly Jam.** (R) **9.10 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.** (R) **9.45 Access.** (R) **9.50 Police Interceptors.** (R) **10.45 Police Interceptors.** (R) **11.40 Police Interceptors.** (R) **12.40 Film: Dear Santa.** (2011) Romantic comedy, starring Amy Acker and David Haydn-Jones. **2.30 Film: Santa Who?** (2009) Family comedy, starring Leslie Nielsen. **4.20 Film: Ice Age: The Meltdown.** (2006) Animated adventure sequel, with the voice of Ray Romano. **6.05 Film: Where Eagles Dare.** (1969) An American general is held captive by the Nazis in a heavily defended fortress in the Alps. A crack team of British soldiers and an American lieutenant are dispatched to free him, but they soon realise there is a traitor in their ranks. Second World War adventure, starring Richard Burton, Clint Eastwood, Patrick Wymark, Michael Hordern and Mary Ure. **9.00 Film: Enemies Closer.** (2013) Premiere. A forest ranger working on the border between the US and Canada has an encounter with an old enemy who has sworn revenge on him. However, the former foes are forced to work together to survive an encounter with a drug cartel's agents, who are searching for a missing shipment. Action adventure, starring Jean-Claude Van Damme, Tom Everett Scott and Orlando Jones. **10.45 Film: The Shepherd.** (2008) A border patrol agent sets out to stop military veterans trying to smuggle heroin out of Mexico into the US. Action thriller, starring Jean-Claude Van Damme and Scott Adkins. **12.35 Campus PD.** (R) **1.05 SuperCasino.** Live interactive gaming. **3.10 The Gadget Show.** Union J check out devices that could enhance festive celebrations. (R) **4.00 House Doctor.** (R) **4.25 Make It Big.** (R) **5.15 Angels of Jarm.** (R) **5.40 Roary the Racing Car.** (R)

## DIGITAL

**BBC Three**  
**7.00 Top Gear** 8.00 Doctor Who: The Ultimate Guide 10.00 Family Guy 10.45 American Dad! 11.30 Some Girls 12.00 Sweat the Small Stuff 12.30 Life is Toff 1.00 Edinburgh Comedy Fest Live 2012 2.00 Extreme Beauty Queens: Secrets of South America 3.00 Some Girls  
**BBC Four**  
**7.00 The Great War** 7.40 Britain's Wild Places 8.00 The Day of the Triffids 9.00 Imagine – Rod Stewart: Can't Stop Me Now 10.50 Fox Fighters: Sonic Highways 12.25 The Story of Funk: One Nation Under a Groove 1.25 The Genius of Funk 2.25 Imagine – Rod Stewart: Can't Stop Me Now 3.50 Close  
**ITV2**  
**2.05 Blue.** The Hot Desk 2.15 You've Been Framed at Christmas 3.15 Ant & Dec's Christmas Show 4.30 I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out of Here! 5.40 Film: The Mummy (1999) 8.00 Scorpion 9.00 The X Factor 10.00 You've Been Framed! 10.30 I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out of Here Now! 11.35 Film: American Pie Presents Band Camp (2005) 1.20 Two and a Half Men 2.10 The Vampire Diaries 2.55 Teleshopping 5.55 ITV2 Nightscreen  
**ITV3**  
**11.30 A Touch of Frost** 1.35 Rosemary & Thyme 2.35 Agatha Christie's Marple 4.40 Film: Columbo: Troubled Waters (1975) 6.45 Inspector Morse 9.00 Lewis 11.00 Cracker 1.10 William and Mary 2.05 Judge Judy 3.10 ITV3 Nightscreen 3.40 Emmerdale  
**ITV4**  
**11.45 Live Tennis.** The Stool Masters Tennis 2.30 Cheers 3.00 Alias Smith and Jones 4.05 Film: Paths of Glory (1957) 6.00 Live Tennis. The Mylan World Team Tennis Smash Hits 9.00 Film: The Specialist (1994) 11.15 Film: Rambo III (1988) 1.20 River Monsters 2.30 Nitro Circus 2.50 ITV4 Nightscreen 3.00 Teleshopping  
**E4**  
**12.30 Made in Chelsea** 1.35 Melissa & Joey 2.00 Film: First Daughter (2004) 4.15 Rude(ish) Tube Shorts 4.30 The Big Bang Theory 8.00 Film: Step Up 2: The Streets (2008) 10.00 The Inbetweeners 11.10 Bad Robots 11.40 How I Met Your Mother 12.40 Rules of Engagement 1.40 Paternity Court 2.35 My Fair Wedding  
**Film4**  
**11.00 Merrill's Marauders** (1962) **1.00 Rat Race** (2001) **3.10 Passport to Pimlico** (1949) **4.55 The Nativity Story** (2006) **6.55 Big** (1989) **9.00 This Means War** (2012) **10.55 Under Siege 2: Dark Territory** (1995) **1.00 No** (2012) **3.25 Close**

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## FILM CHOICES

### MONDAY

**Mistletoe Over Manhattan**, Channel 5, 3.30pm  
Santa Claus's wife goes to New York to perform a Christmas miracle and give her husband fresh inspiration. She befriends a cop who is in the middle of a divorce and offers to become a nanny to his children. She then discovers he still loves his wife, and tries to find a way to bring them back together. Seasonal fantasy, starring Tricia Helfer and Greg Bryk. (2011)

### TUESDAY

**The Lookout**, BBC1, 11.50pm  
A teenager's promising future is cut short when a car crash leaves him with brain damage that affects his memory. Taking a job as a janitor at a bank, he falls under the influence of crooks led by a former school friend. However, as he becomes aware of their plan to pull off a robbery, he makes a desperate attempt to stop them. Drama, with Joseph Gordon-Levitt. (2007)

### WEDNESDAY

**Rabbit Hole**, BBC1, 11.35pm  
A couple's happy lives are thrown into upheaval by the death of their son in a road accident. As they try to keep their marriage from falling apart, the wife forms a friendship with the driver responsible for the tragedy while the husband immerses himself in the past and turns to another bereaved parent for support. Drama, with Nicole Kidman and Aaron Eckhart. (2010)



Dead Poets Society, Friday, BBC2, 11.35pm

### THURSDAY

**It's Christmas, Carol!**, Channel 5, 3.30pm  
A heartless publishing executive is hated by her staff, who are secretly plotting against her. At Christmas, she receives a visit from the ghost of her former boss, who takes her on a journey through her past, present and future to show her where her life went wrong and how she can put things right. Fantasy, starring Emmanuelle Vaugier and Carrie Fisher. (2012)

### FRIDAY

**Dead Poets Society**, BBC2, 11.35pm  
A charismatic English teacher at a New England prep school in the 1950s raises eyebrows among his strait-laced colleagues by encouraging the students to live life beyond their expectations. Unfortunately, the boys find their families and the rest of the teaching staff are not so understanding about their desire to follow their dreams. Drama, starring Robin Williams. (1989)

## PICK OF THE WEEK

# Stars prove Variety is the spice of life

If you were around on November 12, 53 years ago, you may recall the line-up of the Royal Variety Performance. Bruce Forsyth took to the stage at the Prince of Wales Theatre, and introduced the likes of Lionel Blair, Morecambe and Wise, and a fresh-faced young woman from Tiger Bay who became a music legend.

Shirley Bassey made her debut at the prestigious show, only the second to be televised at that point. Of course it wouldn't be the last time she would wow the masses at the RVP. Four years later she was at the London Palladium for another of seven Royal Variety Performance appearances.

In 1971, she and Bruce returned, then Shirley was back again in 1976, the same year comedian-in-waiting Michael McIntyre was born.

After an 11-year break, the diamante diva returned in 1987, by which time Ellie Goulding and every member of McBusted had made their own debut in the world.

By 1994, Jack Whitehall, Demi Lovato and Ed Sheeran had tottered onto the stage of life, and Ms Bassey's services were requested again, as they were in 2000 (at the Dominion Theatre). In 2005, she was on home turf at Cardiff's Millennium Centre, and now Shirley is back at the Palladium for one of the biggest events in the showbiz calendar. "My very first performance on The Royal Variety Performance was in 1961, and with each show it just gets better and better," she explains. "I'm excited and honoured to be a part of this year's show and to share the stage with such great talent."

The aforementioned Mr McIntyre is our host, and the line-up is the starriest since Bob Geldof got out his address book ahead of re-recording the Band Aid single.

Aside from Sheeran; Goulding; Lovato; Bette Midler; Simply Red; Alfie Boe; Ladysmith Black Mambazo's Inala and Collabro, there's comedy from Whitehall; Trevor Noah; Russell Kane; Sarah Millican and Rod Woodward.

Plus, the casts of Miss Saigon and hit cabaret La Soiree are also taking to the stage to entertain the crowd.

McIntyre is thrilled to be fronting the show again: "When The Queen FaceTimed me and asked me to host the Royal Variety Performance again I was utterly thrilled, especially when she told me it was to be in the presence of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, whose presence I have never been in before. I plan on wearing the dress Catherine wore at the St Andrew's University fashion show to guarantee I hold Prince William's attention throughout."

Bette Midler is also thrilled to be taking part: "As a little girl growing up with dreams of being a singer, I never imagined I would one day perform for members of the Royal Family," she enthuses. "It's quite an honour to take the stage before such a distinguished audience, and it's a privilege to be included in a long list of talented artists who have been a part of The Royal Variety Performance for over a century."



Shirley Bassey features, The Royal Variety Performance 2014, Monday, ITV, 7.30pm

## BEST OF THE REST

### MONDAY

**Jamie's Cracking Christmas**  
Channel 4, 8pm

Jamie Oliver whips up a selection of festive, easily prepared dishes in his own kitchen, showing viewers how to impress friends and family with a menu full of delicious treats. Recipes for some of the chef's personal favourites, including beef Wellington, roast goose with all the trimmings, cocktails, steamed goose buns, and chocolate and marmalade panettone bread-and-butter tart, are to help keen cooks raise their Christmas spread to the next level.

### TUESDAY

**Kirstie's Handmade Christmas**  
Channel 4, 8pm

Is there anything Kirstie Allsopp can't do? After all, this is the woman who will not only find you a house with plenty of period features, she could also give you a few pointers on how to make a stocking to hang over that vintage fireplace. In this seasonal special, she's even got her own little grotto (no doubt guaranteed to increase in value) in the very desirable location of Blenheim Palace's magical Christmas fair, where she's joined by top crafters from across the UK to show us how to add the personal touch to this year's celebrations. Kirstie will be immersing herself in some of the

workshops available at the fair, but she'll also be looking a little further afield for her inspiration as she heads to Norway to learn more about the customs that make up a Scandinavian Christmas, and incorporate them into her own crafty ideas.

### WEDNESDAY

**The Lost Honour of Christopher Jefferies**  
ITV, 9pm

Some actors burst onto the showbiz scene with all guns blazing and become overnight stars, burning brightly in the consciousness for decades. Then there are the character actors who beaver away, delivering terrific turns year after year, eventually making the masses realise that they are national treasures. Jason Watkins has fallen into the latter camp for some time now. Now the much-in-demand thespian takes on one of the most demanding roles of his career, as Christopher Jefferies, the man caught up in the 2010 disappearance of Joanna Yeates in Bristol. A retired teacher, Jefferies' life was turned on its head when his tenant Joanna disappeared without a trace just before Christmas, but as the investigation gathered pace, he found himself at the forefront of it –

as the police's prime suspect. Ben Caplan, Shaun Parkes and Peter Polycarpou star alongside Watkins in what's bound to be hard-hitting viewing.

**THURSDAY**  
**BBC Music Awards**  
BBC1, 8pm

Chris Evans and Fearne Cotton host the inaugural BBC Music Awards, broadcast live across BBC One, Radio 1 and Radio 2 from London's Earls Court. An array of British and international singers and bands come together to celebrate the past year in music, and there could be a few surprising collaborations. Performers confirmed so far include Ed Sheeran, Paloma Faith, Take That, Coldplay, George Ezra, Labrinth, Ella Henderson, Calvin Harris and pop-classical fusion quartet Clean Bandit – and not forgetting a certain boy band going by the name of One Direction. During the evening, three

awards will be presented – British Artist of the Year, International Artist of the Year and Song of the Year – and while the first two are chosen by a panel of music journalists, the last one is voted for by members of the public. Also being broadcast on Radio 1 and Radio 2.

### FRIDAY

**A Night in with Olly Murs**  
ITV, 9pm

Five years ago, we had no idea who Olly Murs was. He'd just returned to the UK after backpacking in Australia, and was about to audition for The X Factor for the third time – his first two attempts came to nothing. But it was a case of third time lucky, because Olly was suddenly in the limelight, and was the eventual runner-up to Joe McEliderry. Since then, his laidback charm has won him an army of fans, and he recently released a new album entitled Never Been Better. Olly's success has also led to him being a one-off musical extravaganza, which features performances of his best-known hits, including Dear Darlin', Heart Skips a Beat and his latest single, Wrapped Up, as well as a few surprises moments involving his celebrity friends. "I am so excited about doing my first TV special," says Olly. "The show will be great fun, packed with off the wall comic segments, surprises and, of course, music."



Kirstie's Handmade Christmas, Tuesday, Channel 4, 8pm

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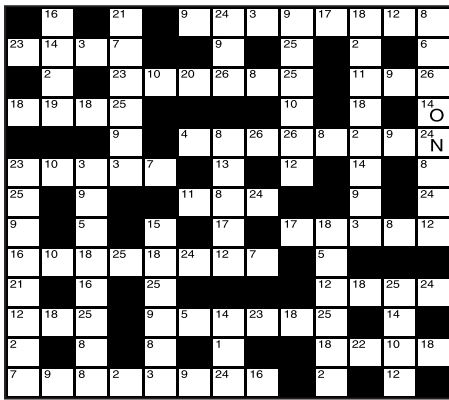
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## Codeword

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.



LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
O	Q	C	Y	G	T	K	X	I	F	Z	U	P
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
S	A	V	H	B	M	R	D	N	L	W	J	E

## Double Crossword

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.

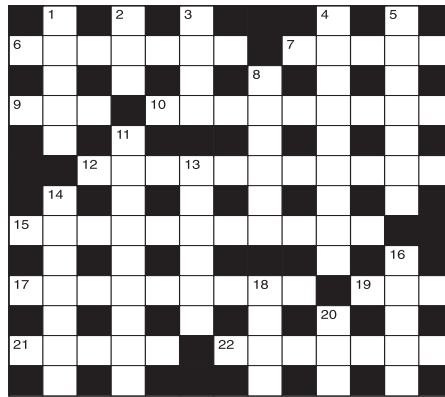
### Cryptic Clues:

#### Across

6. Most important community should provide some interest (7)
7. See 3 Down.
9. What the leaders of amateur college theatres do (3)
10. Side-blow (5-4)
12. Foremen accuse the deck-labourers (6-5)
15. Does it give an image of the French horse? (6-5)
17. This may vary according to the wave formation (4,5)
- 19 & 20Dn. Impose a ban in favour of bridge call? (6)
21. See 22 Across.
- 22 & 21Ac. Search in boat for leguminous food (7,5)

#### Down

- 1 & 14Dn. Deceptive expressions become slogans (5-7)
- 2 & 18Dn. Primitive material for covering the bare facts! (3-4)
- 3 & 7Ac. Passable investment is the result of equitable distribution (4,5)
4. Give reasons for theatrical legal proceedings? (4,5)
5. A dangerous missile when it gets out of hand (7)
8. A dandy also (2,4)
11. Vocalise about the French winter, feeling the cold (9)
13. Show some connection about a confused tale (6)
14. See 1 Down
16. He gives the Spaniard an alternative (5)
18. See 2 Down.
20. See 19 Across.



### Quick Clues:

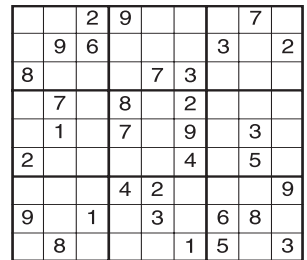
#### Across

6. Continue (7)
7. Cold dish (5)
9. Charge (3)
10. Instruct (9)
12. Dogged (11)
15. Apathetic (11)
17. Designer (9)
19. Attempt (3)
21. Young bullock (5)
22. Punishment (7)

#### Down

1. Command (5)
2. Perform (3)
3. Eager (4)
4. Assembly (9)
5. Display (7)
8. Argent (6)
11. Charmed (9)
13. Protection (6)
14. Falsehood (7)
16. Angry (5)
18. Gang (4)
20. Uncooked (3)

## Sudoku



Fill in the grid below so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS >

7	6	9	5	3	4	1	2	8
2	8	1	6	7	9	3	5	4
5	3	4	1	6	2	8	9	7
3	2	7	8	4	5	9	6	1
9	1	8	7	6	3	2	4	5
6	4	5	9	2	1	8	7	3
8	7	3	4	9	6	5	1	2
4	5	6	2	1	8	7	3	9
1	9	2	3	5	7	4	8	6

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS: CRYPTIC - Across: 7 No time to spare; 8 Hardship; 9 Oxen; 10 Divest; 12 Spruce; 14 Indoor; 16 Repeat; 18 Elna; 20 Achilles; 22 Reign of terror. Down: 1 Donation; 2 Riddle; 3 Mesh; 4 Composer; 5 Uproar; 6 Tree; 11 Toreador; 13 Chaperon; 15 Orange; 17 Paltry; 19 Then; 21 Hath. QUICK - Across: 7 Expeditiously; 8 Sediment; 9 Tank; 10 Pile-up; 12 Thrash; 14 Brawny; 16 Resume; 18 Grab; 20 Inherent; 22 Foolhardiness. Down: 1 Exterior; 2 Desire; 3 Dire; 4 Dictator; 5 Muster; 6 Plan; 11 Physical; 13 Sameness; 15 Wobble; 17 Strong; 19 Room; 21 Hide.

## Quiz

1. What is the orbital period of Halley's Comet?
2. What do the letters PS stand for?
3. Which football team plays at Goodison Park?
4. Who wrote The Naked Lunch?
5. Which actress starred in The Good Life and Rosemary & Thyme?
6. Who wrote the play The Doll's House in 1879?
7. In which country is Montego Bay?
8. Which former Chancellor of the Exchequer's middle name is Winston?
9. King Juan Carlos's wife is the daughter of which country's former king?
10. Of which county is Rutland now a part?

### Last week's solutions:

QUIZ: 1 Judy Garland and Vincente Minnelli; 2 Genoa; 3 Carbon; 4 Bluebird; 5 Arctic; 6 Nautilus; 7 Stanley Matthews; 8 Trombone; 9 Finches; 10 Henry Irving. NINER: PARBOILED

## Niner

Each number from 1 to 9 represents a different letter. Solve the clues and insert the letters in the appropriate squares to discover a word which uses all nine letters.

36821 gives a flower,  
8289 gives another flower,  
7854 gives a fruit.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

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D6857, size 16/18  
D6858, size 20/22  
D6859, size 24/26



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Close to Halesowen Town Centre and Tenfilds Primary School. This end terraced home features gas central heating, cosy living room, dining room, fitted kitchen, 1 double bedroom and 1 single bedroom, bathroom with shower, rear garden, on road parking. Available now. Short term let for 6 months, possibly longer. EPC: E



**HALESOWEN, Newton Court£800 pcm - Fees**  
A recently converted 3 bedroom ground floor apartment finished to an extremely high standard and centrally located with commuter links to Halesowen and Birmingham. Featuring 2 double bedrooms, both with fitted wardrobes, 2 bathrooms, 1 single bedroom, 2 extra rooms downstairs, secondary glazing throughout. Allocated parking. Viewings recommended. EPC: C



**AMBLECOTE, 41a High Street£760 pcm - Fees**  
A fantastic opportunity to rent a new build home on a select development. Featuring homes of 3 generous size bedrooms (master with en-suite) finished to an exceptional standard. Featuring spacious lounge/dining areas, well appointed kitchen, downstairs WC, 3 bedrooms with family bathrooms & master bedroom with en-suite, 2 allocated parking spaces, front & rear gardens. These homes will not be available for long. EPC: B/C



**HALESOWEN, Hollybank Grove£695 pcm - Fees**  
Good size semi-detached property situated in a cul-de-sac position close to popular schools and local amenities. Features 3 bedrooms with fitted wardrobes, 2 reception rooms, family bathroom, fully fitted kitchen. Off road parking, gas central heating and double glazed. This house has been newly redecorated and recarpeted. EPC: E



**HALESOWEN, Wroxley House£625 pcm - Fees**  
Luxury living in Hayley Green. This superb luxury ground floor apartment offering spacious accommodation including open plan lounge/kitchen and diner with patio doors, 2 double bedrooms, master with en-suite, a further well appointed bathroom with shower, gas central heating, double glazing and allocated parking. EPC: B



**HALESOWEN, Haden Arch Court£550 pcm - Fees**  
Contemporary living in Halesowen. This 1st floor spacious apartment above the archway, within walking distance to Halesowen Town Centre and buses, the apartment features gas central heating, double glazing, open plan living room/fitted kitchen, 2 double bedrooms, bathroom with separate shower cubicle, allocated parking. EPC: B



**CRADLEY HEATH, Luanne Close£525 pcm - Fees**  
Situated in this popular residential area, is this 2nd floor apartment, which overlooks the canal and has its own balcony, comprising of: 2 bedrooms, spacious lounge, fitted kitchen, bathroom with shower, access to balcony from the master bedroom, gas central heating, double glazing, allocated parking. Well worth an inspection. EPC: C



**NETHERTON, Round Street£475 pcm - Fees**  
Set in a quiet road, is this lovely semi-detached home. Featuring gas central heating, 1 reception room, fitted kitchen, 1 double & 1 single bedroom, bathroom with shower, rear garden and driveway parking for 2 cars. Popular residential street close to Netherton High Street. 2 months deposit and a guarantee is required. (THE GUARANTOR MUST BE A HOME OWNER, FAMILY MEMBER AND WORKING). EPC: D



**HALESOWEN, Longmoor Road£795 pcm - Fees**  
Large 3 bed mucklow style semi-detached property features: 2 reception rooms, 2 double bedrooms (master with fitted wardrobes), 1 single bedroom, modern bathroom with L-shaped bath, garage, driveway parking for multiple vehicles, gas central heated and double glazed. Ideally located for Huntingtree and Lutley Primary School. EPC: D



**HALESOWEN, Stourbridge Road£750 pcm - Fees**  
Well presented 3 bedroom semi detached house with large driveway for multiple cars/carsin this very popular residential area. Entrance Hall leading to large living room/dining area, fitted kitchen, large private rear garden with open fields at the top, 3 bedrooms, family bathroom and garage. EPC: E



**HALESOWEN, Haden Hill Road£675 pcm - Fees**  
A beautifully presented terraced property situated in Haden Hill area close to local transport links, Haden Hill Park, Halesowen Town Centre and Cradley Heath. Featuring 2 bedrooms, master en suite, 2 good size reception rooms, fully fitted kitchen, utility, separate dining area, downstairs cloakroom, family bathroom, easy to maintain rear garden, gas central heating and double glazing. A property not to be missed! EPC: B/C



**HALESOWEN, Albert Road £600 pcm - Fees**  
An immaculately presented detached house within minutes of Halesowen, in a well sought after location, comprising of: 3 bedrooms, large lounge, dining room, fitted kitchen, utility room, downstairs WC, gas central heating, double glazing, parking to the front, detached garage at rear, front and rear gardens. A property not to be missed. EPC: D



**HALESOWEN, Talbot Street£550 pcm - Fees**  
Step inside this fantastic 3 bedroom terrace property. Renovated throughout within the last 6 months to a very high standard, featuring 2 great size reception rooms, modern fitted kitchen, fully tiled bathroom with electric shower, gas central heating system. EPC: E



**WORDSLEY, Brook Street £525 pcm - Fees**  
An unfurnished end terraced house, refurbished and extended comprising of: gas central heating, double glazing, lounge, fitted kitchen, 2 large bedrooms, bathroom with shower, driveway parking, rear garden. Available now. EPC: C



**CRADLEY HEATH, Sidaway Street£425 pcm - Fees**  
Set in a quiet road, close to local train station, comprising of: 2 reception rooms, 3 bedrooms, gas central heating, double glazing, fitted kitchen, bathroom, rear garden, on road parking. EPC: B/C

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# Mazda3 a genuine player

By Graham Breeze

**Mazda has really stepped up a gear in the last couple of years and the new Mazda 3 hatchback is probably the best of an impressive model range.**

The company has been producing cars that are well made, well priced and fun to drive and the 2.0litre 120ps SE L-Nav tested is a first class example of the progress being made – and is as good as anything in its class.

And that's saying a lot because sitting in the opposition camp you will find Ford Focus, Vauxhall Astra, VW Golf and Kia Ceed so the competition is fierce.

Three main trim grades split the Mazda 3 range. The range starts with an SE, then SE-L, the top-spec is Sport, while adding sat-nav to your car upgrades it to a 'Nav' variant, hence the test car an SE-L Nav.

Mazda's recent success hinges on its 'SkyActiv' engineering technology, which focuses on high-tech manufacturing methods and reduced numbers of components to save weight and improve efficiency and agility.

The technology is really evident in this model as it's lighter, cheaper to run and better to drive than the old one.

Quality hasn't always been Mazda's strong point but things have moved on and the 3 rivals anything in class now with an attractive cabin complete with dense, soft-touch plastics on most of the dashboard.

The well equipped SE L-Nav gets rear parking sensors, Bi-Xenon headlights complete with impressive automatic levelling and cleaning, LED daytime running lights, front fogs and privacy glass.

## Technology

Inside there's heated seats and dual control climate control air conditioning. You get Mazda's own navigation system, an adjustable speed limiter, cruise control, rain sensing wipers and dusk sensing lights too.

I'm a big fan of Mazda's infotainment technology and all functions are easily accessed using a seven-inch colour touchscreen that sits on top of the dashboard, or via a controller mounted between the front seats.

You should have no trouble getting comfortable up front as there's a wide range of seat and steering wheel adjustments available. The dipping roofline make things a bit tight in the back for three though.

Boot space is competitive and the 3 easily passed the golf club test. Rear seats fold almost flat and lie flush with the boot floor



**'Quality hasn't always been Mazda's strong point but things have moved on and the 3 rivals anything in class.'**

but there are more spacious options in this class.

Front and side vision is fine but drivers will find that narrow rear windows annoyingly inhibit views.

The 1988cc engine produces 120ps at 6,000rpm and you can expect to get 55.4mpg on the combined cycle while only producing 119g/km of emissions. There's 0-62mph in 8.9seconds and a top speed of 121mph.

All versions come with six airbags, stability control and a tyre pressure-monitoring

system. The 3 also achieved a maximum five-star rating in Euro NCAP crash tests.

Handling is OK but if I'm being really picky I'd have to say there are better performers in the class. There's some body roll and quite a bit of road noise too.

The test car had an on-the-road price of £19,395 but with metallic paint, leather interior and safety pack that price jumped up to over £23,000.

There's a lot of competitors in this sector but the Mazda3 is a genuine player and well worth the money.

## Ford's popular Kuga SUV gets boost with an update



**The Blue Oval car maker Ford has updated its popular Kuga sports utility vehicle with improved engines and more in-car technology.**

Under the bonnet the flagship Kuga diesel model receives a horsepower boost, with the 2.0-litre motor's output now 180 horsepower – 17 more than before. It's also cleaner, with the 2.0-litre diesel family now producing less CO2.

It's the same story on the petrol front, with Ford swapping the Kuga's

1.6-litre EcoBoost engine for a 1.5-litre unit and reducing CO2 emissions to 143g/km from 154g/km.

Improved

Alongside the engine upgrades, Ford has improved the car's kit levels. The firm's innovative SYNC with AppLink multimedia interface will now enable drivers to voice-activate apps, while keeping their eyes on the road and their hands on the wheel. These already include leading music-streaming services Spotify, Audiotea, Glympse and Radioplayer.

Furthermore, the Kuga can be had

with adaptive cruise control including forward alert, which warns drivers if they are travelling too close to the vehicle in front.

Another standard technology is the tyre pressure monitoring system, which warns if any of the tyres lose significant pressure during a journey.

Further available technologies include hands-free tailgate, blind spot information system, active city stop, lane keeping aid, lane keeping alert, auto high beam, driver alert and traffic sign recognition.

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<b>06/56 Kia Sportage XS 2.0 Diesel</b> 84k, Silver, Alloys, Black Leather, Air Con <b>£5995 / £35 Per Week</b>	<b>07/07 Suzuki Swift 1.3 GL one owner</b> 47k, Burnt Orange, CD Player, E/windows <b>£3995 / £23 Per Week</b>
<b>08/08 Saab 9-3 Vector Sport DTH Diesel</b> Automatic Estate 80k, Grey, Two Tone Leather, Alloys <b>£5995 / £35 Per Week</b>	<b>08/08 Nissan Micra 1.2 16v (79hp) Acenta*</b> 3dr, 48k, Grey Metallic, *LOW INSURANCE* Air Con <b>£3995 / £23 Per Week</b>
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<b>09/09 Vauxhall Corsa 1.3 SXI CDTi Diesel</b> 3dr, 52k, Grey Metallic, Alloys, Air Con <b>£4995 / £30 Per Week</b>	<b>05/55 Vauxhall Astra Club 1.6 Twinport</b> Semi-Automatic Blue, 50k, Alloys, Air Con <b>£3295 / £22 Per Week</b>
<b>07/07 Ford Fusion 1.6 TDCi Plus Diesel</b> 48k, Silver, *ONLY £30 ROAD TAX* *AVG 62 MPG* Alloys <b>£4695 / £27 Per Week</b>	<b>07/57 Kia Picanto 1.1 LS</b> 53k, Silver, *LOW INSURANCE* *ONE OWNER* CD Player, <b>£2995 / £17 Per Week</b>
<b>07/57 Renault Kangoo 1.6 Expression Automatic</b> *ONLY 37k MILES*, Red, E/windows <b>£4495 / £26 Per Week</b>	<b>04/54 Rover 45 1.8 CVT Club SE</b> AUTOMATIC 5dr, *ONE OWNER* *ONLY 19k MILES* Silver, Alloys <b>£2195 / £12 Per Week</b>

Finance example: Vauxhall Corsa 1.3 SXI Diesel, Cash Price £4995, Deposit £300, Amount of credit £4695, Fixed interest rate 6.25% Flat rate, 12% APR, 48 Payments of £122.28 (£30.50 per week) Total amount payable £6169.44 (Excludes £150 Document fee and £150 Completion fee, Subject to status)

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# A new engine for the Swift

By Graham Breeze

**Suzuki is determined to strengthen its UK position with the January arrival of a new and much more efficient engine for Swift.**

The company has recognised opposition growth in this lower end of the market with Fiesta and Corsa both boasting efficient one-litre alternatives and launched a new 1.2-litre petrol unit incorporating Suzuki's latest technology, utilising twin fuel injectors for improved fuel economy.

That means fewer trips to the petrol pump, startling fuel figures and emission levels lower than the vehicle excise charge level.

The new technology, known as Dualjet, has resulted in Swift boasting 65.7mpg on the combined fuel consumption cycle, representing a 16 per cent improvement over the current petrol engine.

Another benefit of Dualjet technology is reduced CO2 emissions of 99g/km, meaning that Swift models with this engine are now exempt from VED (Vehicle Excise Duty) charges.

Outwardly the test car looked no different and to be honest it was impossible to tell it apart from the current petrol model – the only difference will be in the driver's pocket.

When the car arrives in showrooms in January it will cost you an extra £500 but owners will recoup the extra spend pretty quickly.

Add the money you save on visits to the pumps to the £175 saving on excise licence costs and it makes sense to choose the new Dualjet model.

It's a complex system but the new technology positions the fuel injectors closer to the engine inlet valves allows for a finer fuel mixture which provides a more effective transfer into the cylinder. Internal modifications to the engine include the use of a new type of inlet port and combustion chamber with other mechanical parts also



modified to reduce frictional losses and provide smoother running.

The maximum power output is 90PS versus 94PS for the current petrol engine with a slightly increased torque figure of 120Nm at 4,400rpm versus 118Nm at 4,800rpm.

Other modifications include slight alterations to gear ratios for greater flexibility on the road, and the addition of Engine Auto Stop Start (EASS).

The new Dualjet technology for Swift will initially be available as an optional engine choice on SZ4 two wheel drive models.

There are, of course, better equipped opponents to Swift and while you get what you pay for with this model inside the cabin there's a dynamic feel and attractive black seats with colour-coding stripes.

**'It was impossible to tell it apart from the current petrol model – the only difference will be in the driver's pocket.'**

Global sales of Swift have now passed the four million mark since launch in 2004 – 18 months after the celebration of three million units.

Launched in the UK in May 2005; more than 90,000 Swifts have been sold and now account for around 30 per cent of the UK sales mix.

Since June 2014 all Swift models are fitted as standard with LED daytime running lights and front fog lights.

A gear shift indicator was also added on manual models to help aid fuel efficiency as well as a Tyre Pressure Monitor System.

Swift is available in four clearly defined specification grades, SZ2, SZ3, SZ4 plus Swift Sport; in addition to seven airbags and ESP as standard, SZ2 has front passenger airbag deactivation facility, electric front windows, remote

central door locking with deadlocks, electrically adjustable and heated door mirrors.

There's a MP3/WMA compatible CD tuner with USB port and steering wheel mounted audio controls.

SZ3 adds air conditioning, 16-inch alloy wheels, an integrated audio unit with bluetooth connectivity, including music streaming facility.

Since June, SZ4 models are equipped with navigation and DAB digital radio as standard which adds to the already high specification that already included automatic air conditioning, electric rear windows, rear privacy glass, push button keyless start, automatic headlamps, cruise control and mirrors with integrated turn indicators.

That's a pretty high spec for a car that will only set you back £11,500 in January.

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Official Government Test Environmental Data. Fuel consumption figures mpg (litres/100km) and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (g/km). Lowest: Vauxhall Corsa 3 Door Hatchback 1.2i 85PS 16v Excite A/C with 14", 15" and 16" wheels, M5: Urban: 39.2 (7.2), Extra-urban: 62.8 (4.5), Combined: 51.4 (5.5). CO<sub>2</sub> emissions: 129g/km. Highest: Vauxhall Corsa 3 dr Hatchback 1.6i 16V 192PS VXR Turbo (A/C) with 17" wheels, M6: Urban: 28.8 (9.8), Extra-urban: 47.9 (5.9), Combined: 38.7 (7.3). CO<sub>2</sub> emissions: 172g/km

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## Fuel on motorways a rip-off

Supermarket petrol prices may have fallen but drivers feel they are being ripped off by motorway services fuel tariffs, according to a new RAC survey.

Research from the motoring organisation showed that petrol and diesel prices at motorway service stations can be as much as 10p higher than those elsewhere.

Of 1,463 motorists polled, 74 per cent reckoned motorway prices were "very expensive" with 26 per cent refusing to buy fuel at motorway stops.

As many as 63 per cent said prices should be capped so fuel was no more expensive on motorways than at non-motorway forecourts.

More than a quarter (27 per cent) would be happy with fuel being capped at just a few pence over the non-motorway price, and only 10 per cent believed nothing needed to be done.

Also, 44 per cent said they only bought fuel at motorway services when they had no other choice. Almost 20 per cent admitted to putting in "just enough fuel to get by" at motorway services and finding a cheaper alternative later.

In addition, 76 per cent said service stations should display the price of their fuel before drivers pulled off the motorway so they knew what they would have to fork out.

RAC fuel spokesman Simon Williams said: "It's no wonder that motorists feel held to ransom with prices on the motorways inflated to such an extent."

"We can see no reason why motorway fuel should be so much more expensive. In fact, arguably it is much easier from a delivery point of view than it is getting fuel to urban filling stations."

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Finance Example - Cash Price £4995, Less Cash or Part Exchange Deposit £500, Amount of Credit £4495, Total Amount Payable £5995 20, 60 Monthly Payments of £39.92 or 240 Weekly Payments of £23.04.

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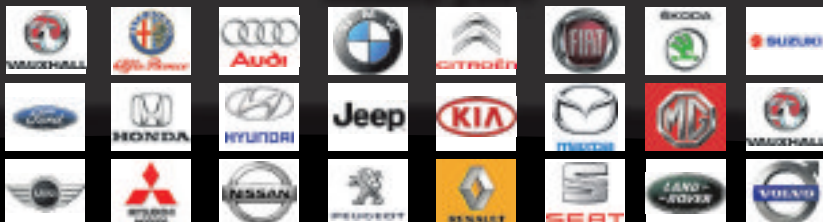
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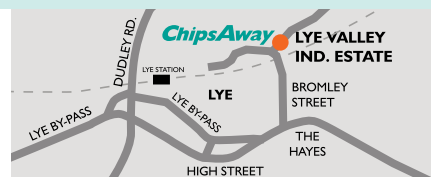
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6  
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## Clarke rounds off year with win

HALESOWEN super middleweight prospect, Lennox Clarke, signed off the year with a sixth consecutive professional boxing victory.

After blasting out his previous two opponents – Joe Walsh and Raimonds Sniedze – inside a round, the 23 year-old The got valuable ring time under his belt on Saturday evening as he went the distance with awkward Welshman, Jamie Ambler, at Walsall Town Hall.

Clarke was battling against a nasty head cold and the bout was reduced from six rounds to four.

Ambler used all his experience to smother Clarke at every opportunity, obviously wary of the raw power the exciting prospect possesses. Clarke often went hunting for the big shot and never truly relaxed into the fight. However, victory was rightly his as he recorded a shut-out points 40-36 win to extend his unbeaten run.

“I got through it,” Clarke told www.uko-boxing.com. “Ambler was holding and pushing down on my neck all the time. He just came to survive.

“I got a good four rounds in though and that’s what I needed. I got the win and that’s what matters.

## Penalties end it for Glassboys

**Stourbridge 1 Leek 1 aet (2-4 pens)**  
STOURBRIDGE bowed out of the Doodson Sport Cup at the second round stage to Leek Town in a penalty shoot-out.

The match at the War Memorial Ground finished 1-1 after Ryan Shotton levelled in the third minute of injury time for the visitors.

The home side looked to have been easing their way into the third round thanks to a dazzling solo effort from Josh Morgan-Parker a minute into the second half.

Kristian Ramsey-Dickson and George Bowerman were successful from the spot for Stourbridge, but Paul McCone and Luke Benbow had their kicks saved as Leek took the shoot-out 4-2.

# Heroic comeback not enough for Hales



Hat-trick scorer Tom Bulteel

**OHHC 1sts 4 Stourport 5**  
Old Halesonians Hockey Club Men’s 1st XI fell agonisingly short in the final two minutes of the game versus Stourport, after a monumental comeback.

Hales who continue to flirt above the relegation zone in Midlands Division 1, hosted table toppers Stourport.

The visitors got off to an exceptional start, and Hales looked like they were still in the changing rooms, as they quickly found themselves 2-0 down.

Stourport then dispatched a third goal in under 15 minutes as they ran away with the

### Hockey

lead. It got worse for Hales, as prior to Stourport’s third, Hales defender Mark Curzon was hit in the face, which saw him needing stitches. Soon after, Hales got a goal back to make it 3-1.

Paul Woodall saw his effort at the back post, stopped illegally on the line by a Stourport defender. Tom Bulteel dispatched the resulting penalty flick with power into the net.

Stourport struck back almost immediately, to re-establish their three goal lead, as they took a

4-1 lead into the half-time break. In the second half Tom Bulteel made the score sheet again.

Hales’ momentum grew, and the score was 4-3 after Graham Knight saw his effort blocked by the body of a Stourport defender. The umpires awarded the hosts their second penalty, which was scored by Paul Woodall.

Stourport were reduced to 10 men. Hales’ perseverance paid off when they were awarded a third penalty flick. Tom Bulteel sealed his hat-trick to draw the scores. Hales were to suffer a final blow however when a Stourport striker rounded goalkeeper Steven Charlton to slot home the winner.

# Irvine feels the heat from Baggies fans

**Albion 1 West Ham 2**  
**ALBION fans turned up the heat another notch on boss Alan Irvine as his side squandered a 1-0 lead.**

Albion slumped to a fourth successive Premier League defeat. Craig Dawson’s header provided the Baggies’ first goal in four games to reward them for a good start with a 10th-minute lead.

But the goal appeared to prompt nerves within Irvine’s team and they conceded two poor goals before half-time, giving free headers to the Hammers’ Kevin Nolan and James Tomkins.

Under-pressure Irvine, who had been targeted by a section of fans in Saturday’s defeat to Arsenal, suffered again – this time becoming the victim of gallows humour.

Irvine had made two changes from the side beaten by the Gunners with Chris Baird replacing the injured Sebastien Pocognoli at full-back while Victor Anichebe came in for Youssouf Mulumbu, meaning a switch to a wide role for leading scorer Saido Berahino.

Albion made a determined start and had already carved out a couple of half-chances before taking their 10th-minute lead.

The first two fell to Anichebe, whose cross-shot from a tight angle was headed behind before he overpowered two defenders and let fly with a 20-yard shot that was deflected over the crossbar for another flag-kick.

Dawson signalled his threat from set-pieces twice early on, first when he just failed to make a clean con-

### Football

nection with a Chris Brunt corner after jumping highest in the area and then when he headed into the side netting at the far post from another flag-kick by the skipper.

But the visitors failed to heed the warnings and left the determined Baggies defender unmarked to head his side in front with their first goal in four Premier League matches.

It had been a sluggish start from the Hammers but, as the first half wore on, they grew into the game and made the most of some sloppy passing from Albion.

The Hammers had seized the initiative so it was no surprise when they levelled 10 minutes before the interval, although Brunt was furious at the award of a free-kick which led to the equaliser.

Brunt headed away James Tomkins’ header from the set-piece and Foster saved an overhead kick from Andy Carroll but neither could prevent the unmarked Nolan heading home from close range.

In stoppage-time Tomkins rose at the far post to head his side ahead.

## Christian breaks the Villa victory voodoo



Aston Villa’s Gabriel Agbonlahor, left, and Crystal Palace’s Yannick Bolasie, right, during the match at Selhurst Park

**Crystal Palace 0 Villa 1**  
CHRISTIAN BENTEKE single-handedly dragged Villa out of their nine-game winless streak.

His first goal in nine months secured victory at Crystal Palace. Benteke side-footed the winner in a low-quality Premier League encounter at Selhurst Park to toast his return from a three-match ban.

The Belgian hitman was dubbed “one of the best strikers in Europe”

by Villa boss Paul Lambert in mid-week.

Palace slipped to their fifth defeat in eight games, and had only themselves to blame, wasting countless half-chances in a fruitless search for a quality final ball. Villa moved three points ahead of Palace in the table, sucking Neil Warnock’s side further into what could yet become one of the most widely-fought Premier League relegation scraps in years.

Benteke handed Villa their first win since a 1-0 victory at Liverpool on September 13, atoning in part for his reckless dismissal against Spurs.

So his match-winning strike in south London will have gone some way to repaying both manager and team-mates for that ill-judged clash at Villa Park.

Benteke’s calm finish punctuated the otherwise staccato arrangement of Palace’s disjointed attacks.

## Leek are out of Tivs league

**Leek Town 2 Tividale 0**  
TIVIDALE went down to two goals that epitomised the step up in standard to the Evo-Stik First Division South.

The first a pass of poor quality. The second a clinical finish from a moment of indecision. And though the visitors battled gamely they were never able to quite bridge the gap in quality to the home side.

Leek were a goal up after just 15 minutes when Matt Bell played a perfectly weighted ball in between Danny Ashton and Mark Smith for Tim Grice to finish.

Although Leek had the better of the half Tividale would have felt that they were still in it at 1-0 down going into half-time. But disaster struck in stoppage time when a split second of indecision over a clearance after Price had blocked a Dan Shelley shot was enough for Shotton to nip in and fire home.

The visitors took the fight to the home side in the second period, although they could not mount a sustained amount of pressure to cause Leek too many real problems.

Leek on the other hand were always a threat.

## Golbourne will be out for weeks

WOLVES defender Scott Golbourne faces several weeks out after suffering a recurrence of his long-term foot injury.

The 26-year-old full-back only made his return at Brentford on Saturday after missing nearly two months with plantar fasciitis – a problem which affects the arch of the foot.

But he lasted just 45 minutes at Griffin Park before having to come off and head coach Kenny Jackett revealed the defender now faces even more time on the sidelines.

“The first estimate is that he will be out for several weeks,” he said.

“It is what he had before and that will be a good few weeks out.”

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Loss piles pressure  
on Albion boss  
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## Samaras relishes a hectic schedule

**STRIKER** Georgios Samaras believes the frantic fixture schedule in December could be a blessing in disguise for Albion.

The 29-year-old reckons the intensity of the games between now and the new year could help Alan Irvine's men find some rhythm as they look to inject momentum into their season.

Albion have eight games to play by New Year's Day.

And Samaras, who is keen for his first Baggies start after signing in the summer, said: "December is a busy month. I have no problems with that. At Celtic from September until December we always had a midweek game because of European games or cup games so it's something I enjoy and love.

"It's easier to find rhythm as a team when you play more.

"When you have the international breaks you find you play a few times, have a break, play more games, then have another break. It's hard for the team to find a rhythm. "We have nine games in 36 days and I think that it will be good for us."

And Samaras believes he is finding his own rhythm after a disrupted start to his career back in the Premier League.

The former Manchester City man has struggled for fitness since moving.

## Runners in 'Suicide' race

**ATHLETES** from Dudley Kingswinford Running Club competed in one of the toughest off road races in the area.

The Suicide 6 is a six-mile race organised by the Action Heart Charity held in Bagderidge Country Park.

The blue hoops managed a total 40 runners with Gary Bonner leading them home in 34th place in 43.48, just ahead of Dave Norman, a place and a mere seven seconds adrift and Darren Bishop a further second behind in 38th place.

James Wright held onto 42nd place in 44.16, from Mick Quane in 45.52. Simon Hughes was 68th in 46.25, Kieran Pitt was 83rd in 47.59, Richard Tonks was 103rd in 48.43, Mark Judge was 111th in 49.24, Helen Tromans 116th in 49.32, Paul Silk was 50.12 for 124th place and Mark Homer clocked 50.19 (126).

## Old Hales are heading into the cup final

**North Midlands Cup Semi Final**  
**Old Halesonians 33 Newport (Salop) 5**

A rare Saturday afternoon away from the pressures of National League Rugby, gave the Hales coaching staff the opportunity to rest players for this North Mids Cup Semi Final match against last years relegated league rivals Newport.

Newport were well drilled and showed true potential in this game, defending and counter attacking well. Hales' pack dominated the scrum with a front row of Louis Padian, Callum Young and Tom Dempsey pressurising their opposition throughout.

### Rugby

On 18 minutes constant pressure by Hales forced a penalty which Chris Hooper kicked to the corner. Young found Tom King who took a clean ball supported by his pack. The ever improving Guy Field secured the ball and drove over for a try, converted by Hooper.

Newport were rewarded on 27 minutes with an unconverted Try.

It took just four minutes, and another dominating Scrum, for Hales to extend

their lead. Player coach Mark Evans picked up from the back and smashed his way through for a Try, converted by Hooper.

A further period of dominance was rewarded on 40 minutes when Warren Oliver to scored.

With Hooper injured during the play, Matt Williams converted. In the second half Hooper was replaced by James Mitchell who went on the wing. Andy Holloway to full back and Oliver to Centre.

However, it made little difference to the play other than the odd counter from Newport, which was well-defended by a deter-

mined Hales side. On 62 minutes a planned move from a scrum on the Newport 22 saw Williams feed Holloway inside who seared through the defence unopposed for a great try, converted by Holloway. Hales made some more changes with Prop Harry Higgs on for Tom Dempsey and James Sadler in for Loz Breese, both players fitted in immediately and contributed well to the game.

Continued pressure by the home side in the 75th minute saw a perfectly placed kick by Williams to the opposite side of the field for flying Winger Luke Smith to touch down.

## Baggies give up goal lead

**Derby U-21s 1**  
**Albion U-21s 1**

DERBY'S Alban Bunjaku cancelled out Alex Jones' opener as Albion had to settle for a 1-1 away draw in their Under-21s Premier League game.

Lee Naylor recorded the first effort of the contest for Derby after three minutes as he shot wide.

Albion's first chance fell to Adil Nabi, who curled an effort wide.

Samir Nabi dragged a late effort wide on the stroke of half-time before the Baggies took the lead early in the second period.

Bunjaku had headed straight into the arms of Daniels before Albion broke straight to the other end and took the lead through Jones.

Andre Wright pulled a ball back into the centre of the box for Jones to strike past Roos.

Their lead did not last long, though, as Ward delivered a high ball into the six-yard box that was not dealt with and Bunjaku smashed high into the net. Derby came the closest to finding a winner but Thomas headed straight into the arms of Daniels.

## Nathan nets winner for TD

**Team Dudley 3 Trysull 2**  
STEVE Whitehouse and 17-year-old Calvin Campbell had put them 2-0 ahead before Trysull could get a foothold in the game.

They were level with an 81st minute Danny Patrick effort and Liam Illsley's strike five minutes later - Dudley's Nathan Jones hit the winner.

**The Chronicle, a Midland News Association Ltd publication, printed by the company at Ketley, Telford. Thursday, December 5**

# LATE GOALS PUT YELTZ THROUGH

**FA Trophy 3rd Qualifying Round**  
**Halesowen Town 2 Gresley FC 0**  
**LATE goals from Ilysedon Christie and Chris Lait finally overcame Gresley's stubborn resistance.**

Halesowen were propelled into the FA Trophy first round proper. Gritty Gresley's hopes were boosted on the news that their Halesowen

nemesis Ben Haseley would miss the game through a virus.

And it was the Moatmen who were much happier with the goal-less first half after containing their higher league hosts to keep them from getting ahead in the game.

Christie stabbed just wide from eight yards in the 15th minute and Gresley goalkeeper Ross Atkins made a tremendous 38th minute save after Robert Thompson-Brown was put clear on goal with Danny Bragoli only planting the inviting rebound over the bar.

### Threatened

At the start of the second half Christie failed to find a header in front of goal before the visitors threatened in the 58th minute when Luke Edwards flashed the ball over the bar from 10 yards at the end of a neat Gresley move.

With a replay looming large, Halesowen's patience was finally paid off with two goals within in the last 10 minutes.

A long ball forward from Joel Kettle in the 81st minute led to Christie challenging goalkeeper Atkins and as the ball broke free Chris-

### Football

tie turned off the ground to scramble home to finally get the Yeltz off the mark.

The Moatmen pushed forward to try and get an equaliser but a defensive lapse from goalkeeper Atkins with five minutes remaining enabled home substitute Lait to steal in.

He stroked home the second Yeltz goal from close range in a conclusion which saw the visitors taken out of the cup running and Halesowen looking to face more trials in the competition.

The Yeltz have been drawn away to Vanarama Conference side Gateshead FC in the FA Trophy First Round. The tie will be played on Saturday December 13 at 3pm.

**Halesowen Town:** Sargeant; Green, Griffiths, Forde, Hull (c), Tilt, Kettle, Bragoli (Tonks 64), Christie, Thompson-Brown (Lait 64), E. Turner (MacKenzie 74).

Unused Subs: Robinson, Pearson (GK).

**Gresley FC:** Atkins; Johns, Roome, Hanson, Carlisle, Graves (c), Smyth, O'Connell, Edwards, Langston, Steadman.

## Jordanne to end year with career best ranking



Jordanne Whitley with her NEC Wheelchair Tennis Masters third place award.

Photo - The Tennis Foundation

**HALESOWEN'S** Jordanne Whitley is set to end 2014 with a career best year-end ranking of No.5 after another personal best performance at the NEC Wheelchair Tennis Masters last week.

She finished third in the women's singles after beating the world No. 1 player twice in five days.

Whitley became the first Brit to reach the last four of the women's singles on her debut at the Interna-

tional Tennis Federation's year-end singles champion in California in 2013, but with the prestigious event moving to Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park London until 2016, Whitley thrilled the home fans when she beat Japanese world No. 1 and defending champion Yui Kamiji 6-2, 6-3 in the first of her three-round robin pool matches midway through last week.

The British No.1 went on to finish top of her pool after additional

straight sets wins over Dutchwoman Sharon Walraven and German world No. 4 Sabine Ellerbrock to go through to face world No. 3 Aniek van Koot in Saturday's semi-finals. Whitley then came from 5-2 down to take the opening set on a tie-break and at 5-2 up in the second set she had three match points against van Koot. However, the Dutchwoman proceeded to fight back and eventually clinched a 6-7, 7-5, 6-2 victory.



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**VIVIAN KENNETH GIBSON Deceased**  
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